

HARNESSING CULTURAL CAPITAL FOR SUSTAINABILITY

A Pan Africanist Perspective



EDITED BY
Munyaradzi Mawere &
Samuel Awuah-Nyamekye

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Edited by

**Munyaradzi Mawere &
Samuel Awuah-Nyamekye**



*Langa Research & Publishing CIG
Mankon, Bamenda*

Publisher

Langaa RPCIG

Langaa Research & Publishing Common Initiative Group

P.O. Box 902 Mankon

Bamenda

North West Region

Cameroon

Langaagrp@gmail.com

www.langaa-rpcig.net

Distributed in and outside N. America by African Books Collective
orders@africanbookscollective.com
www.africanbookscollective.com

ISBN:9956-762-50-4

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Cultural Capital, Social Security and Sustainability in Conversation

An Introduction

Munyaradzi Mawere and Samuel Anuab-Nyamekye

Cultural capital as forms of knowledge, skills, education (formal, informal or non-formal) and other such resources based on group membership, relationships, and networks of influence and support have always promoted social mobility, social security, and societal development since time immemorial. The link between cultural capital, social security and sustainability has, however, been dislocated through time especially with the tide of change that has been brought about as a result of colonialism, globalisation, neo-colonialism and other such forces. This link – now the missing link – seems to have eluded the post-independent leaders in the African continent. Surprisingly, it is not that these leaders are not aware of the ever existence of this link as studies abound to show this beyond doubt (see for example: Ntiama-Baidu *et al.* 2003; Sheridan and Nyamweru 2008; Mawere 2014a; Attuquayefio and Fobil 2005). The point is: more often than not, the African leaders, as their policy makers, have failed or refused to factor in cultural capital of the indigenous peoples on the pretext that the capital does not yield anything less than disaster and chaos. By cultural capital, we refer to the French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu's (1986) one of the four types of capital namely; economic capital (resources based on cash and assets), social capital (resources based on group membership, networks and relationships), symbolic capital (resources available to an individual on the basis of recognition, prestige or honour). As already alluded to cultural capital are resources based on forms

of knowledge, education, and skills available to members of group of people.

In this book, *Harnessing Cultural Capital for Sustainability ...*, some explorations of the role that African cultural capital could and should assume to guarantee social security, development, and sustainability on the continent and at international level are carefully and meticulously made. Basing on those explorations from across the continent, it is noted in this book that lofty pan-African ideals of collective self-reliance, self-sustaining development and economic growth would come to naught unless determined and decisive steps towards full recognition of cultural capital such as different forms of knowledge, skills, education, and belief systems are unflinchingly taken. On this note, the present book, in a similar thrust as that of the World Bank (1998) acknowledges that the basic component of any human society's education, development framework and sustainability is its cultural capital and full recognition of diversity in knowledge production and advancement.

The central theme that runs through all the chapters that comprise the present volume is based on the authors' realisation that most post-independent African governments have not laid much emphasis on the role and continued relevance of cultural capital in fostering social security, development and sustainability in their respective countries. Even where there seems to be an attempt to factor in cultural capital into their scheme of affairs, they often neglect a key factor in the whole matrix of cultural capital – indigenous knowledge system – of the *indigenous* people. Such disregard of cultural capital possibly stems from post-colonial African governments' lack of independent development framework and their over reliance on West epistemologies and practices to confront and address African problems. In fact, post-colonial governments have depended too much on the Western theories, developmental frameworks, conceptualisations and definitions to the extent of allowing the West to think and determine the direction for the continent. This is dangerous a

scenario. To bring our point closer home, we make reference to the widely used and indeed acknowledged definition of ‘sustainable development’ by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in 1987 as economic and social development that meets the needs of the current generation without undermining the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (WCED 1987: 8, 43). This definition has been viewed as the best of all the definitions ever given in view of the concept of sustainable development, yet it has been of late criticized by some scholars (Williams and Millington 2004; ICLEI 1997) for being too Western-based. Williams and Millington (2004: 100), for instance, have pointed out that this so-called standardised definition has been ‘resisted and contested by ‘many commentators’ (p. 100) for, ‘it is allied to a particular [Western] worldview’ (p. 100). Again, the WCED’s definition is criticised for not factoring in and put into serious consideration the important aspect of culture and the environment in the whole equation of sustainable development. The International Council for Local Environmental Initiative (ICLEI, 1997), for example, pointed out that the key component of sustainability should be the society, the economy and the environment. It argues that ‘the balance or equilibrium between these three stakeholders should be considered as sustainable development’ (cited in Mawere, 2014b: xx).

Being in mind the observations and criticisms elaborated above, *Harnessing Cultural Capital for Sustainability* ... emphasises not only the economic and environmental aspects of sustainable development, but also the socio-cultural and political dimensions of sustainable development from the Pan-Africanist perspective. In the African context, all these three aspects [environmental, socio-cultural, economic, along with the political aspect], are factored in when talking of development and its sustainability. Africans traditionally approach life-related issues from a holistic perspective. For them, humans are not alone in this world but live in association

with “other beings”¹ (Mawere 2015). This stems from their worldview which is embedded in their indigenous cultures and religious beliefs systems. Religion arguably can be said to be the most dominant aspect of African culture. This is because religion manifests itself in every endeavour of the African people. This explains why African culture is often described as religious culture (Mbiti 1991; Mugambi 1996). It is for this reason, among others, that we concur with Mbiti (1991: 10) when he argues that religion ‘is by far the richest part of the African [people’s] heritage.’ No wonder some African societies such as the indigenous Akan of Ghana, consider sustainable development as any human activity that: a) aims at affirming life in a holistic way, b) enables every generation to ensure its survival; and c) enables generations to hand over the survival potential to the future generation as directed by culture (which is hugely influenced by religion) (see Awuah-Nyamekye 2009).

Unlike the Western societies where the concept of science and issues of sustainable development have been restricted to empirical observations and laboratory tests, in Africa, cultural capital together with environmental conservation knowledge and other such skills are profoundly interwoven in the mantra of sustainable development. It is this complex equation of the

¹ Munyaradzi Mawere prefer using the term “other beings” to Bruno Latour (1987; 1993; 2005) and others’ [i.e. Michel Callon 1986] “nonhuman” because for him there are some “creatures”/entities that are difficult to classify either as humans or nonhumans as they are part human and part nonhuman. Mawere gives examples of Vampire and the Werewolf (see Jake Kosek 2010: 672), which he says, are part human, part nonhuman becomings that result from the contagion of the battlefields. Basing on his researches in the Norumedzo Communal Area in south-eastern Zimbabwe, Mawere also gives many other examples of such entities as *vadzimu* (ancestors), *mbondoro* (lion spirits), and *njuzu* (mermaids/half fish half human creatures) that according to his interlocutors in the Norumedzo are not purely humans. Neither are they purely nonhumans, but are simply referred to by the locals as *zvisikwa zvaMwari* (other beings created by God). In this introductory chapter, we use the terms humans and other beings, the latter to refer to all those entities that cannot be classified as humans both in part or in totality.

African conceptualisation and understanding of the matrix of sustainability that eludes many elites African political leaders and policy makers who are still trapped at the edge of colonialism and neocolonialism such that they remain holding fast onto Western ideologies and approaches in their bid to address African problems. Kroma and Flora (2001), for instance, cast blame on the current neglect of indigenous beliefs and knowledge systems concerning environmental conservation on Western education and values, which African political elites of today have gullibly and wholly embraced without seriously thinking about their consequences. Scholars on indigenous resource management such as Mawere 2013, 2014a, 2014b, 2015; Mukamuri 1995; Sheridan and Nyamweru 2008; Mapara 2009; among others, have argued that a study of environmental management in Africa show that pre-colonial Africans were able to manage, with considerable degree of success, their environmental challenges before the imposition of the Western scientific strategies by the colonial governments which have today been adopted hook line and sinker by post-independence African governments. Amannor (2003: 1) aptly captures this in his argument that ‘despite nominal decentralisation, environmental policy remains largely unresponsive to rural interests.’

In fact, there is a general consensus that there is no single authorised response to environmental, economic, and even political challenges of today and thus, it will be an understatement to say that it will be an exercise in futility if political authorities in Africa and beyond (particularly in other so-called third world countries) refuse to recognise the input of cultural capital of the indigenous peoples in any policy intended to fight problems (of any particular magnitude or nature) confronting them. It is this grand realisation that prompted the noble idea to undertake a project such as the present; a project that explores different ways through which cultural capital could and should be harnessed to ensure continued survival of indigenous African people’s environments, political systems,

and economic powerhouses, while at the same time fostering development that is sustainable in their respective societies. It is in this context that the contributors to this impeccable volume have strongly argued, from diverse case studies and perspectives, to bring to the fore the different potential roles that cultural capital could and should assume in Africa's quest to ensuring sustainability of all its systems.

In this respect, chapter 1 by Munyaradzi Mawere and Tapuwa R. Mubaya grapples with disaster risk management strategies in Africa using the perspective and epistemological lenses of the indigenous Shona of Zimbabwe as a case study. The duo argues that natural disasters such as drought and famine pre-date colonial Africa and in particular colonial Zimbabwe. But in all cases, the Shona people, relying on their wealthy experience of the environment and indigenous epistemologies, had been able to manage or withstand the onslaughts of these anti-surviving natural phenomena. In terms of the specific indigenous Shona mechanisms designed to confront the menace of drought and famine in Zimbabwe, Mawere and Mubaya mention *zunde ramambo* (chief's common granary), *nhimbe/jakwara* (beer cooperative parties), *Musanganiswa wembeswa* (intercropping), growing drought-resistant and early-maturing indigenous crop varieties, hunting and gathering wild fruits and vegetables, wetlands cultivation, *kupemba* (a diversity induced begging) and rain-petitioning ceremonies. They go a step further to provide graphic descriptions of how each of the above-mentioned indigenous Shona mechanisms was (and continues in some areas to be) deployed either in isolation or in association with others to successfully hold the devastating effects of drought and famine in check with little or no external intervention. They are, however, quick to point out that the above-discussed Shona anti-drought-famine mechanisms are, today, not as effective as they used to be in pre-colonial Zimbabwe. They cite globalisation, among other factors, and particularly what they refer to as 'the introduction of the *triumvirate* of colonialism,

Western education and Christianity’ as the principal causes of the erosion of Shona indigenous ways of knowing and the daunting of famine-disaster mitigation strategies. Hitherto even with the tide of change sweeping across Zimbabwe, Mawere and Mubaya observe that all is not lost yet, as indigenous practices and ways of knowing continue to direct the lives of the Shona. Another refreshing development they point out is that Zimbabwe, though still has a lot desired to be done, is at least making strides towards the full recognition and inclusion of indigenous practices and ways of knowing in their environmental policies and the school curriculum. In spite of this good sign, Mawere and Mubaya urge the government and policy makers in the country to wind up their businesses and work towards the full recognition and inclusion of indigenous epistemologies, strategies and mechanisms in areas like education, health, weather monitoring exercises, and others in Zimbabwe as the need to do is more urgent than ever if sustainability is to be ever realised.

In chapter 2, Pius Abioje interrogates the political violence that has characterised post-independence Nigeria, which is affecting peace, law and order, and sustainable development. He identifies the issues of religion, ethnicity and leadership – the ethnic background of the person – as the key factors that have bedevilled Nigeria soon after her independence, thereby taking it off-track and threat sustainability in the country. Abioje observes that the unofficial adoption of rotational presidency which was orchestrated by some concerned elders across Nigeria in 1998 could have been a better way to address the violence that escalates after almost every general election in Nigeria. Unfortunately, this laudable idea was truncated in 2011 by the then Nigerian President, Good Luck Jonathan who argued that it has no constitutional basis. Abioje, thus, links the upsurge of *Boko Haram’s* bloody activities in Nigeria to the issue of leadership. And, he blames it on the sudden truncation of the rotational presidency by President Jonathan. Though some other factors such as ethnicity and religion are to blame,

Abioje sees *Boko Haram's* bloody activities as leadership problem and not religious or ethnical as it is generally believed to be. He critically engages with the existing literature both the pros- and cons- on the issue of rotational presidency system but argues persuasively that peace, stability and sustainable development in Nigeria hinges on rotational presidency.

Moussa Traoré through a review of Jacques Roumain's novel – *Gouverneurs de la rosée* – analyses the Pan-Africanist and Marxist ideas in the novel which he believes could be handy to Africa in its quest for sustainable development. In his chapter 3, Traoré describes the novel as the most politically and socially engaged work of Jacques Roumain. For him, the novel sheds light on the socio-historical progression of Haiti, as the first black republic of the world. One important thing that Traoré draws attention to in the discussion is the fact that, unlike what Eurocentric perspectives maintain, the image of Africa is a positive one as it comes out clearly in the novel that the warning against decimation of the environment as well as idea of sustainable development has been with the indigenous Africans long before it became the concern of most individuals and organisations of the world as we see and hear today. Basing on this claim, Traoré underscores that '*Gouverneurs de la rosée* is a pan-Africanist and radical political work and also a blatant exposition of the consequences of the denial or violation of sustainable development.' To push his argument even further, the author uses the tirelessness, perseverance and tenacity of purpose demonstrated by Manuel, the protagonist of the novel, to encourage the fostering of sustainability in Haiti and to draw attention of African leaders to the fact that sustainable development is not realised on a silver platter, but through hard work and determination. Another instructive point that the author brings to the fore as he critically analyses and juxtaposes Jacques Roumain's novel with African affairs is that, Haiti is the pride of the African race, but 'the contrast lies in the fact that the first *African* republic of the world which brought pride and dignity to blacks all over the world found

itself some years along the line as a society in “decomposition”: ‘betrayal among neighbours, massive unemployment, abject poverty and migration of the youth in search of greener pastures’. Traoré concludes that this realisation should serve as a reference point for Africa to guide against falling into the same trough as the struggle for sustainability continues.

In chapter 4, Nelson Chanza provides a nuanced, judicious and complicated analysis of indigenous-based adaptation initiative to sustainable climate change strategies for Africa. He argues that despite the improvement in scientific models to study current climate system and predict the future climate, overreliance on Western-based knowledge in Africa is not the best but to say the least, is dangerous and threatens sustainability. Drawing on his vast knowledge of literature in the field, Chanza, provides evidence from across Africa to demonstrate that indigenous communities are not passive observers of the change in climatic conditions, but for a very long time used ‘their rich traditional knowledge both for predicting the occurrence of drought and for utilising various choices in their indigenous adaptation toolboxes.’ The effects of climate change on Africa are already ‘noticeable in its broad impacts ranging from decreased agricultural production and food insecurity; water stress and water quality problems; and *ecosystemic* damages’. What this means is that an African response (indigenous-based adaptation) is imperative in any policy that is intended towards Sustainable Climate Change Strategies. Therefore, the argument that runs through the discussion is that ‘there is need to break the epistemological and methodological boundaries that have dominated climate changes studies over the years’ and give serious or equal consideration to ‘indigenous epistemologies and worldviews’, for indigenous people have been witnessing environmental changes brought about by climate change, and have endured and developed appropriate strategies to confront the menace of climate change over time. Chanza, thus, concludes his chapter by lobbying for the active involvement of indigenous

communities in finding an effective climate change adaptation policy which he thinks is an imperative ingredient for sustainable development in Africa.

Of late, a common mantra when it comes to finding a holistic solution to a country's (especially in the so-called third world one) problem has been that: 'all hand must be the deck'. More often than not, one of such helping hands that visibly come to mind is Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). Therefore, drawing on their rich knowledge of existing literature on foreign aid in Africa, Mawere and Chingozha in their chapter 5, delve into the nitty-gritty of NGOs. They, in a complex way, examine the interplay between rural communities and NGOs on one hand and the complexities involved in these NGOs attempt to partner with governments to ensure development particularly in the rural communities in Africa, and particularly in Zimbabwe. To make their argument even clearer and more convincing, Mawere and Chingozha provide the various nuances under which the term NGOs can assume and the various types based on their orientation and character. They trace the historical development of NGOs worldwide including the time they became actively operational in Africa. Mawere and Chingozha, argue that regardless of their orientation as charitable, service, participatory, or empowering the vulnerable, 'some of them can be described as agents of imperialism due to their *modus operandi*' that disregards worldviews and epistemologies of the communities the NGOs intent to serve. For the NGOs to avoid the risk of being associated with imperial agents, Mawere and Chingozha, opine that the NGOs can only enjoy public confidence due by simply avoiding formal funding from the government and thus being independent of governmental control. This postulation comes as Mawere and Chingozha realise and appreciate the positive role that NGOs should and could play in their quest to deal with the problem of sustainability, vulnerability and poverty most especially in the rural communities in Zimbabwe. Mawere and Chingozha, thus, point out that though the activities of

many of the NGOs operating in Africa have been problematic, they '[NGOs] both within Zimbabwe and elsewhere in the world, are undoubtedly the essential players in peace building, education, and promotion of a health environment' as long as they execute their mandates without bias. Mawere and Chingozha conclude their chapter with a chain of laudable recommendations to streamline the operations of NGOs particularly in Africa and elsewhere in the world.

Akiti Glory Alamu, in his chapter 6, examines the role the institution of sacred places play in fostering sustainable environment in Nigeria. Alamu begins his chapter by looking at traditional African worldviews, which he demonstrates to be hugely religious and provides evidence that this worldviews have the potential to influence direction to the indigenous Africans in all their endeavours and spheres of life. While he critically conceptualises 'sacred places', Alamu marshals evidence both from primary and secondary sources to show the important role these [sacred] places play in environmental sustainability in indigenous African societies. Yet, in spite of this positive aspect of indigenous religious beliefs and practices, Alamu contends that some of these beliefs and practices instil unnecessary fear in people. This is not to say that Alamu undermines the role that sacred places play in many traditional African societies. He concludes his discussion on the note that sacred places, wherever they are found, ensure environmental sustainability.

In the face of religious rivalry between Christianity and Islam in Nigeria which has negatively affected the country's peace, stability and development, Hezekiah Olufemi Adeosun's chapter 7 examines the relevance of *Ifá* – a Yorubá indigenous religion – in addressing the tapestry of problems that confront Nigeria today. The author gives a brief historical background of how the two dominant religions – Christianity and Islam – emerged in the Nigerian society. He also provides statistical evidence on the numerous religious conflicts involving these two impinging religions – either between Christians and

Muslims or among Muslim or Christians, all which have retarded the stability and sustainable development in Nigeria. In the face of this, Hezekiah Olufemi Adeosun, observes that *Ifá*, the indigenous religion of the people, has always played a pivotal role in fostering social stability and national development prior to Yoruba's encounter with the West. Adeosun, in fact, gives credit to *Ifá*, religion he claims, has estimable virtues such as 'hospitality/kindness, avoidance of wickedness, honesty/integrity, impartiality, and tolerance', which are obviously the key ingredients for peace, stability, sustainability, and development. Throughout, his discussion, Adeosun copiously shows how *Ifá* as a way of life has been handy in ensuring that the Yoruba people live in harmony with one another and with their environment. His central argument, which he strongly expatiates in this chapter, is that the surest way for Nigeria to possibly achieve peace, stability and development is to "go back to their root and practice the ethos of their indigenous religion, *Ifá*," given that *Ifá* religion contains almost if not all what they need as a people to live sustainable life.

Using Mozambique as his case study, Munyaradzi Mawere's chapter 8 tussles head on with the oft-neglected issue of African intangible heritage, particularly, indigenous African languages and its impacts on Africa's equation of development. Mawere takes a critical view of Africa's language policy to make the argument that Africa's failure to adopt, incorporate, and endorse indigenous African languages as official languages in their respective societies does not only derail Africa's socio-economic growth, but also impinges negatively on the African people's cultural identity. By official language, Mawere mean the language(s) that is/are 'officially recognised for use by the government of a country, education authorities, and employers (in both public and private sectors) as the medium of communication'. Focusing on his case study, Mozambique, Mawere finds it very worrying and disturbing that Portuguese language continue being popularised in post-colonial

Mozambique some more than three decades after national independence, and where in fact, less than one percent of the population has Portuguese language as its mother language while over thirty-two “local” or legitimately “national languages” continue to be neglected or side-lined. Supporting his argument with literature from around the continent, Mawere highlights the problems that have resulted in the continuous use of foreign language(s) as official languages in Africa. He, for instance argues, based on his researches in and on Mozambique, that one of the major factors underlying primary level learning difficulties, grade repetition, underperformance, and high dropout rates in Mozambique is the continued relegation of indigenous languages in Mozambique’s education curriculum. Based on the same researches, he further underscores that popular opinion in Mozambique favours the adoption of an indigenous language as the country’s official language, yet the authorities seem not to be proactive in this respect. This inflexibility of policy makers, for Mawere, is putting a respectable number of Mozambique (and indeed that being the case in many countries, south of the Sahara) in a disadvantaged position for the simple fact of their inability to communicate in Portuguese. As a matter of consequence, Mawere argues that this possibly makes a large segment of the country’s population inactive in terms of participation in sustainable development agendas. He, thus, advocates a multilingual policy that addresses the current linguistic injustices being perpetrated against the Mozambican people (and other African peoples across the continent). In this regard, Mawere explores the possibilities of using indigenous languages alongside Portuguese as a medium of instruction at schools and for commercial purposes. This, in his view, will help to restore the value, cultural identity, and dignity of indigenous African people besides fostering sustainable development on the [African] continent.

Samuel Awuah-Nyamekye, in his chapter 9, discusses the relevance of indigenous knowledge system for promoting

sustainability in Africa. He criticises leadership of Africa today for their reluctance or inability to wean themselves of the colonial legacy of using mainly Western-based knowledge systems to address African problems. Awuah-Nyamekye cites concrete examples to demonstrate that the Africans by virtue of being familiar with their environment have learnt to live sustainably with it. He argues out the point that Africa's developing problems can be attributed to the neglect of African indigenous systems for the wholesale adoption of Western epistemologies in African developmental agendas. Awuah-Nyamekye is, however, quick to stress that he is not romanticising African indigenous knowledge. Neither is he advocating the total rejection of Western scientific knowledge; rather, his concern has to do with the erroneous view that Western Scientific knowledge is universal and limitless in terms of its spatial transferability and vitality in dealing with problems that haunt humanity across the world. Awuah-Nyamekye's argument, therefore, is that since there is no single authorised [by people all continents] response to environmental, economic, and even political challenges of today, it is imperative for the current crop of African leaders to give due consideration to African-based knowledge system in their effort to achieve sustainability. He concludes that the way out does not lie in the abandonment of indigenous knowledge of the Africa as was the case during the colonial episode on the continent, but rather, the solution lies in finding a way to dovetail African indigenous knowledge system into the Western scientific knowledge so as to holistically tackle the challenges that confront and threaten sustainable development in Africa.

In chapter 10, Joshua Chikozho, Tapuwa Raymond Mubaya, and Munyaradzi Mawere examine the manifest role Nyaminyami popularly qualified as 'the Tonga river-god' plays in the Tonga people of Zimbabwe's cosmological understanding and environmental conservation practices. To aid their readers to understand the context and follow the story

of the Tonga people, the authors provide a brief but succinct profile of the study area and the people on whom the research centres. They then discuss religious worldviews of the Tonga before linking them to the specific role that the ‘Tonga river-god’ plays in the life of the people. In this whole attempt, Chikozho, Mubaya, and Mawere, capture the importance of the river to the Tonga people such that they underscore that ‘the life of the Tonga people revolves around and is centred on this resource in many dimensions; economic, socio-political, religious and/or spiritual needs.’ For them, this is one reason why the Tonga people are ever ready to swear by the ‘Nyaminyami –Tonga river-god’ in all their endeavours. Thus as enunciated by Chikozho, Mubaya, and Mawere, the ecological significance of the river lies in the fact that its ‘basin is considered as the focal point in terms of energy, wildlife, biodiversity, wetlands, water resources and conservations’. This aside with several shrines dotted along its course which are treated with respect and reverence due to the strong belief people have in the river. Although conflicting myths exist on the history of the ‘Tonga river-god’, the physical presence of the rivers in the view of the authors has religio-cultural, and ecosystemic importance for the people.

In a more or less similar style as that adopted by Moussa Traoré in chapter 3, Liveson Tatira’s chapter 11 explores the depiction of polygamy in some selected Shona literary works. The point of departure between the two, Tatira and Traoré, is that while the latter’s review novel gives positive picture of the African people, Tatira’s review demonises the African race. Basing on his reviews, Tatira charges that ‘the colonialists, through their writings about the Shona marriage, wanted Shona people to believe that prior to colonialism, they led a chaotic life, which illicitly begged for a colonial redemption’. He points out that the narratives he reviewed have been silent on the functional purpose of polygamous marriage in the pre-colonial Zimbabwe but rather presented distorted facts (depicting it as acrimonious practice) about polygamy apparently with the view

to demonising the practice. Tatira is not convinced in the inherent contradictions in the narratives. He, for instance, queries how in one breath, Gararirimo (one of the main characters in one of his review literary work) is a hopeless drunkard, yet in another breath, he is seen as a prosperous farmer (*burudzwa*). This, Tatira questions, as for him 'industriousness and drunkenness are irreconcilable characteristics of one personality'. And again, Tatira claims that in traditional Zimbabwean society, it was (and is) not possible for a drunkard to marry and sustain a marriage with many wives as Gararirimo is portrayed in the narrative. Before concluding with the positives that polygamy as was traditionally practised in traditional Zimbabwe yielded, Tatira critically examines the conditions under which polygamous marriage is permitted and the specific key role it plays in indigenous traditional Zimbabwean society.

Drawing on the medium of proverbs from both the indigenous religion and Christianity, Kojo Okyere and Vincent Assanful explore, in chapter 12, the role that proverbs play in fostering sustainable lifestyle. The authors argue that both African and biblical proverbs contain gems of wisdom that provide epistemological lenses on how to achieve a sustainable world. Okyere and Assanful cite a plethora of proverbs from their indigenous culture to back their claim. Realising the potentialities that indigenous approaches and systems have in fostering a sustainable world, Okyere and Assanful bemoan the lack of political will on the part of post-independence African leaders to include traditional values, epistemologies, and practices in their developmental policies. In their bid to break the current impasse, Okyere and Assanful impress upon African leaders and academicians on the need to pay attention to what flows out of the people, and what the people believe as important in promoting sustainable life on earth. In their conclusion, Okyere and Assanful contend that it is imperative for African leaders (and likewise academics) to explore creative ways to include indigenous epistemologies and practices in

their developmental agendas rather than dismissing them head
wink as unscientific and unreliable.

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Chapter 1

Indigenous Mechanisms for Disaster Risk Reduction: How the Shona of Zimbabwe Managed Drought and Famine?

Munyaradzi Mawere and Tapuwa R. Mubaya

Introduction

Though arguably human induced in a way, drought is a common recurrent natural-induced phenomenon in the Southern region of the African continent, and Zimbabwe in particular by virtue of its geographical location is no exception. Mawere, Madziwa and Mabeza (2013), following Bird and Shepherd, have noted with concern that Africa is one continent that has been badly affected by climate change over the past few decades. Arguing further, Mawere, Madziwa and Mabeza (2013) maintain that in the African continent, and in particular Zimbabwe, most of the poverty stricken people are predominantly located in the semi-arid regions of the country where they heavily rely on rain fed agriculture for their subsistence. Zimbabwe just like many other developing economies in Africa, thus, appears on an expansive list of drought and climate change affected nations worldwide and as such is highly vulnerable to vicissitude of weather patterns (see NCPCC 1993: 31). This means that Zimbabwe is undeniably prone to a number of natural and man-made epidemics such as droughts, floods, veldt fires, storms and famines, among other serious outbreaks which unfortunately pose a grave threat to the food security of most Zimbabweans (see Prevention web 2012; Owonubi and Abdumumin 1985; Gwimbi 2009; Mazzeo 2011; Mawere, Madziwa, and Mabeza 2013; Mogotsi *et al* 2012; Mudavanhu and Chitsika 2013; Matutu 2014), especially those

residing in rural areas that naturally receive little and inadequate agricultural rainfall.

In view of the preceding background, CEDRISA (2009) opines that drought is one of the most common disasters in Zimbabwe in the African continent with horrors associated with it dating back to the pre-colonial times. In the pre-colonial times, the term for recurrent drought and disasters has been known as *shangwa* or *nzara* (cf. Iliffe 1990). We should however, hasten to point out that these terms differ and vary in their usage across the country. In other parts of the country such as Chiredzi (which is located in south-eastern Zimbabwe), *chingwangwa* is also another term that is used to refer to drought (see CwDaCC 2009). Although it is evident that Zimbabwe has suffered several severe droughts in the past as was documented by John Iliffe (1990), it has never experienced a killing drought where multitudes of people die due to starvation and malnutrition. The 1992 drought, for example, was described as the worst of the century but fortunately did not culminate into a food crisis (or famine) as a result of rapid coordinated intervention at both national and international levels (Borsotti 1993; Kinsey *et al* 1998; von Braun *et al* 1998: 34). It is pathetic to note that despite crippling the nation and accelerating poverty, droughts have indisputably contributed to the already low life-expectancy levels and high levels of emigration the country has experienced since the turn of the millennium. We should note, however, that famines just like droughts are not unique to Zimbabwe. Throughout history, drought and famine have occurred periodically in most, if not all, societies (cf. Borton and Nicholds 1994). The 1882 famine, for instance, which came right at the outset of the colonial occupation of Zimbabwe, was one of the most severe ones which sadly forced women to eat their skin aprons and resulted in hundreds of people perishing (see von Braun *et al* 1998: 34).

Though drought and its close associate ‘famine’ remains a genuine challenge to most rural communities in Zimbabwe, affected people have throughout history devised diverse coping

mechanisms to manage the challenges brought about by this scourge. In Africa, ‘traditional’ or local knowledge is strongly linked to local culture and past experiences. Over long periods of time the indigenous communities have acquired knowledge about their experiences with nature, through their daily interaction and perceptions of their immediate surroundings or environment (Fabiya and Oloukoi 2013). It is widely agreed that experience is the best teacher. The varied and numerous encounters with drought and famine which differed in severity and magnitude prompted the people of Zimbabwe especially in the olden days to develop necessary indigenous experiential knowledge or what we call indigenous mechanisms for disaster risk reduction, to deal with the afore-mentioned disasters. These indigenous mechanisms for disaster risk reduction range from *zunde ramambo*, *nhimbe/jakwara* (beer cooperative parties) intercropping, growing drought-resistant and early-maturing indigenous crop varieties, hunting and gathering wild fruits and vegetables, wetlands cultivation, *kupemba* (a diversity induced begging) to rain-making ceremonies among many others. Such indigenous devised measures and survival strategies enabled rural communities to survive the onslaughts of drought and famine with little or no support from the outside world. The use of indigenous strategies and/or philosophies to reduce disasters such as drought and famine should, therefore, not be underestimated.

This chapter examines disaster risk management strategies in Africa. In particular, the chapter examines how the Shona people of Zimbabwe, since pre-colonial times, managed risks and disasters such as droughts and famine. The chapter begins with an exploration of the Shona as a people. This is followed by a discussion on the various mechanisms that for a long time have been deployed by the Shona people to mitigate drought and famine. The major argument advanced in this chapter is that people living in Zimbabwe’s rural areas that receive little and inadequate rainfall should seriously consider reverting back to some of the indigenous practices and strategies used in the

past to mitigate drought and famine, if ever they are to boost their food security in the face of climate change.

Understanding the Shona people of Zimbabwe and their society

The term 'Shona' is now used to refer to various linguistic dialect groups who occupy the greater part of Zimbabwe and central western part of Mozambique (Mawere 2010), but according to history (cf. Gelfand 1979; Beach 1983; Chiwaura 2015), the word Shona is derived from the word 'Sohna' or 'Sonu' in Punjab and Sanskrit, which means beautiful and handsome respectively. The term was used to refer to the whole land of Mutapa – the land of Sohnna – which was considered by Portuguese traders as beautiful and rich in gold. It is this word that was later corrupted to Shona.

The Shona constitute one of the largest, therefore, the dominant communal-cultural groups with more than 60 % of the Zimbabwean population (ZIM STAT 2012). This group is an aggregate of small ethnic groups who are all classified as Shona because they each speak a dialect of what the linguists call the Shona language (cf. Gelfand 1979; Mawere 2010). According to Beach (1983), they settled on the Zimbabwean plateau in about 1 A.D, having moved from the north and across the Zambezi River into the country. Up until the Nguni from the present day South Africa and White incursions in the 1830s and the 1890s respectively, the Shona were the most dominant political group on the plateau. They were responsible for the creation of the powerful pre-colonial states of Great Zimbabwe, Torwa, Mutapa, and Rozwi (cf. Beach 1980; Chigwedere 1980, 1982).

One other important feature of the Shona is that they were (and some are still) a community of crop farmers and animal herders. Before the advent of colonialism the principal crops grown by the Shona were finger- millet, bulrush- millet, and sorghum (see Tauyanago *et al* 2010). They also grew leguminous crops, chief of which was cowpeas (*nyemba*).

Cultivation also included a variety of vegetables such as pumpkins (Tauyanago *et al* 2010). Describing the Shona, Bourdillon (1982) notes that their life revolved around food production such that their success or otherwise had ripple effects on society. Such effects could include drought, famine, starvation, and, in some cases, civil strife. Because of their importance, grain crops not only contributed to food security, but also to the nature of social and economic relations among the Shona. Using satirical language, Carol (quoted in Mutasa 2010: 5) emphasised the role of agriculture in Zimbabwe arguing that when agriculture sneezes the Zimbabwean economy catches a cold. It is thus undeniable that the impact of drought on agriculture and food security in Zimbabwe has left a memorable legacy amongst various communities in Zimbabwe considering that Zimbabwe is an agro-based economy whose food security is heavily depended on rain fed farming (see also Matutu 2014).

The Shona people, guided by their cosmological and philosophical survival strategies, had their own home grown mechanisms of coping and adapting to the environment well before their engagement with the outside world. As the descendants of the Bantu people who had an intricate and successful interdependence relationship with nature and the broader cultural landscape, they devised measures of mitigating various unpredictable disasters such as drought and famine through their practical and constant interaction with nature (see also Mukwada 2000). Yet, it is worth noting that the severity of drought on the Shona populations has not been homogenous. They varied from one area to another, one season to another, and from one also household to another. In fact, the degree of vulnerability to drought in the communities is a function of many complex and intricate factors and issues and these include disposable household income, alternative means of livelihoods, resilience of households and the role of the government and other none state actors in providing intervention measures and programmes (Matutu 2014). Over

time and through experience, the Shona amassed a wealth of knowledge that they used to craft indigenous practices, strategies and mechanisms to avert the adverse impacts of disasters. Such practices were considered as part and parcel of their rich cultural heritage hence they were handed down from generation to generation through the process of socialisation chiefly through oral mode and practically. By and large, the various indigenous mechanisms were first and foremost in conformity with the ethos of nature. Adding to that, they were both user-friendly and sustainable. They were sustainable in the sense that since their adoption and subsequent use way back, they could still be utilised in contemporary Zimbabwe to address the challenges of droughts without compromising and endangering the needs of the present and future generations. We, therefore, agree with Tarugarira (2014) who concluded that Africans have hailed sustainable development through indigenous knowledge systems as the panacea to Africa's development quagmire. This is not to say that indigenous knowledge is only limited to indigenous peoples and cannot include knowledge originating from elsewhere: it is only that this kind of knowledge has been internalised by local people through local processes of learning, testing and adaptation.

In conformity with the above sentiments, Alteri (1995: 114) posits that since time immemorial, IKSs were used by societies in Africa and the rest of the world for various purposes depending on the needs of the society in question. Although indigenous knowledge has failed to die through catastrophes, such as the racial and colonial blitzes, they continue to be marginalised even in contemporary society. It is sad to note that people generally tend to fall back on IKSs only as a rescue package. That is, it is during moments of desperation that rural communities resort to the long forgotten age-old techniques to cope with hunger and food shortages (see also Taruvinga 2014). Over the course of history, and to date, the people of Zimbabwe more often than not resort to the use of indigenous knowledge as a way of mitigating the adverse effects of

drought and famine. These traditional strategies and mechanisms of managing drought and famine are however being negatively impacted by the unapologetic waves of modernity and globalisation hence some of them are either being weakened or being gradually daunting. Of paramount importance to note is the fact that the indigenous practices exhibit a deep understanding and ability to cope with disasters through local actions. As such human practices that evolved over centuries have been tested through time and proven to be sustainable and effective in both reducing disasters and managing unavoidable hazards. This means that there should be full realisation by contemporary society that such practices must be acknowledged and widely embraced as alternative approaches to mitigate disaster risks.

Mechanisms used to manage drought and famine: What role for the Shona?

There is often confusion as to the boundary and distinction between droughts and famines. For Anderson and Woodrow (1993), droughts are normally considered the precursor of famines. It is crucial to point out that the degeneration from droughts to famines can be very quick resulting in mass starvation and occurrence of epidemic diseases (UNDRO and UNEP 1984). However, rarely does a single year of drought causes famine, and that transition from drought to famine is highly possible in countries that have limited resources and lack social-policy preparedness (von Braun *et al* 1998) such that although the two terms ‘drought’ and ‘famine’ are often used synonymously there is a minor difference as shown above.

While the tide of globalisation has swept across the African continent, including Zimbabwe, the Shona people especially those residing in the country-side continue to be guided by their values, taboos and beliefs in almost all spheres of life. In agriculture for instance, there are certain practices that they were dependent on in the past, which have to some extent

persisted to this day (Mapara 2009). Below are some of the commonly used mechanisms that since time immemorial were used by the Shona to manage drought and famine:

***Zunde raMambo* (Chief's Common Granary)**

In traditional Shona society, there was no individual ownership of land as the chief or king was the custodian of all land in his area of jurisdiction (Ncube *et al* 1997). The chief as a traditional leader has to promote the welfare of his/her people, and *Zunde raMambo* (The King's common granary) is one medium through which this was realised. Loosely translated, *Zunde ramambo* is the Shona phrase for the chief's vast piece of land that is communally owned. To be more specific, *Zunde* was a common field designated by a chief for cultivating food crops by the community (see also Kaseke 2006; Gudhlanga and Makaudze 2012; Kaseke 2013; Gukurume 2013; Mawere, Mukombe and Mabeza 2013b). What this entails was that apart from his personal farming land the chief also had a separate communal field where people would work communally and the chief was the overall manager. Subjects would take turns yearly to till this land, weed it and to harvest it using their own resources and the chiefs' (Gudhlanga and Makaudze 2012; Mawere and Rambe 2012). Upon harvesting the produce would be put into the chief's granary for storage (Kaseke 2006; Gudhlanga and Makaudze 2012; Mawere and Rambe 2012). The main objective of *Zunde raMambo*, thus, was to ensure collective well-being of humanity. It was a traditional social security arrangement designed to address the contingency of drought or famine. In case of natural calamities like drought, the Shona would also descend on the chiefs' homestead to secure grain harvested from his *Zunde raMambo*. As such, the chiefs in traditional Shona culture are revered as symbols of social protection, social cohesion and cultural preservation (Mawere and Rambe 2012). This means that in time of agricultural catastrophe the *Zunde raMambo* system acts as a

local social safety net for the poor and vulnerable members of the community (Gukurume 2013; Matutu 2014).

The harvest from *Zunde raMambo* is stored in granaries at the chief's homestead as food reserves, which will be distributed to the chief's subjects only in the event of food shortages such as drought or when other calamities like El-Nino waves and cyclones strike (Dhemba *et al* 2002; Gudhlanga and Makaudze 2012; Mawere and Rambe 2012). Although all members of the community could benefit from the food reserves, priority was given to older persons, widows, orphans, persons with disabilities and even aliens (Ncube *et.al* 1997; Kaseke 2006; Gudhlanga and Makaudze 2012). Traditionally, the food reserves from *Zunde raMambo* were also used to feed the chief's soldiers (*Machinda aMambo*), given their role in protecting the entire community. The community was thus motivated to provide their labour for *Zunde raMambo* voluntarily because they benefited in various ways and degrees. This voluntary participation helped to enhance the community's sense of belonging, responsibility, solidarity and identity. Sometimes the chief would also use this food to feed *marombe* (beggars) and travellers who would pass by through his village and sleep at his place. In times of drought and war the chief would also give his people some food rations from this common granary. This amply demonstrates that the Shona traditional society was self-sufficient and catered for disadvantaged and vulnerable groups.

In addition, the *Zunde raMambo* practice is also testimony to the significance of community cohesion (Gukurume 2013). This is corroborated by Dhemba et al. (2002) who argued that historically *Zunde raMambo* was used not only to produce communal crops for food security, but also as a social, economic and political rallying-point for the community. It should thus be argued that the *Zunde raMambo* ensured self-sustenance and protection in the event of drought or poor harvests. Mawere and Rambe (2012) observed that in many contemporary rural settings, peasants may suffer from hunger

or starvation due to drought, laziness, daunting community cohesion, poor planning for the rain season and lack of inputs because of abject poverty. In all these circumstances, in ancient times, true altruism would compel the traditional chiefs and headmen to provide grain to their subjects /peasants irrespective of the cause of hunger. It is important to point out that during the colonial period, *Zunde raMambo* schemes disappeared following the establishment of new power structures by the colonial regime. The new power structures curtailed the powers and responsibilities of chiefs. Thus the ‘new’ state assumed the role played by *Zunde raMambo*, although in reality the state abdicated its responsibilities on racial grounds (Gudhlanga and Makaudze 2012). In some rural communities in southeastern Zimbabwe, *Zunde raMambo* has been put up as a project (known as Zunde raMambo Project) as a vital strategy adopted by the locals to effectively enhance community’s adaptive capacity. Mararike’s (2001) analysis of *Zunde raMambo* as traditionally practised in Zimbabwe shows that the strategy has a long history as a traditional social welfare practice in rural Zimbabwe (see Box 1).

Box 1: A description of the Zunde raMambo project

Zunde is a Shona word that may mean a large gathering of people taking part in a common activity or may refer to plenty of grain stored for future use by people in a particular community. However, *Zunde* normally means an informal, in-built social, economic and political mechanism. Its primary aim was to ensure that a particular community had adequate food reserves that could be used in times of food shortage. The *Zunde* practice ensured that food security for a village(s) was guaranteed at all times. A Chief designated a piece of land for cultivation by his subjects. The yield from this land was stored in granaries (*Zunde raMambo*) at the Chief’s compound. The food was also used to feed the Chief’s soldiers, subjects awaiting trial, the Chief’s advisors, and the destitute, as well as travellers who stopped in the village for the night. Village ceremonies such as burials also benefited from the *Zunde raMambo* food reserves. The main beneficiaries were, however, the

villagers themselves during times of food shortages.

Zunde was perceived not only as a crop production activity whose main objective was to address food shortages, but was also regarded as a social, economic and political rallying mechanism. The chief to control his people and to ensure their safety used it. Participation in the *Zunde raMambo* was an expression of oneness and carried with it social and moral obligations. Food was perceived not only as a means of meeting nutritional requirements, but also as a social tool which brought people together to share their successes and/or failures.

(Source: Mararike, 2001: 54-55)

***Nhimbe/jakwara* (Collective work)**

The communalistic nature of the Shona society embedded within their ethical and societal values and mores enabled them to see to it that the welfare and plight of the disadvantaged and vulnerable members were promoted and looked after by the entire community. It is no exaggeration to state that the traditional social structure of the Shona people catered for everyone since they were some community-based mutual aid arrangements that specifically catered for the orphans, the widowed, and those who were visually and physically challenged. Such benevolent measures were meant to ensure that nobody goes hungry. For Hume (1888/1973), benevolence is construed as compassion for others in need, often marked by disinterested caring acts of generosity or kindness. Mawere and Rambe (2012) interpreting Hume's views on benevolence, posit that the traditional Shona leadership's provision of treasures to their subjects was informed by sheer sympathy to ease the agony of their subjects, whatever its form – landlessness, hunger, protection, wisdom and knowledge. It is, therefore, important to note that one of the prominent social security mechanisms which provided support to disadvantaged and vulnerable community members in the event of exposure to risks was *nhimbe/jakwara*. The word *nhimbe* comes from the

Zimbabwean Shona language and culture. It means people coming together and working to achieve a common goal. Loosely defined, *nbimbe* is a social practice that is usually undertaken during the weeding and harvesting season by generally most of the ethnic groups in Zimbabwe. The situation that obtains is that the community collaborates collectively in their agricultural activities and then later on drink traditional beer locally known as “*ndari/doro*” or “*7 days*” (Dodo *et al* 2012; Mudavanhu and Chitsika 2013; Gukurume 2013) hence, *nbimbe* is also known as beer cooperative party. *Nbimbe* was more of a way of teaching people to cultivate a sense of an African ideal of the individual’s communal responsibility. Mungazi (1996: 40) in view of a traditional African perspective of an individual is apt to note that the individual’s “place in society was determined more by his contribution to its well-being ... the individual had to be trained to remain sensitive to the needs of the community as a whole and others as individuals.” Busia (1964: 17) further clarifies the African ideal of socially-centred human development when he notes that: “traditional education sought to produce men and women who were not self-centred, who put the interest of the group above personal interest.”

Doro is also used to mobilise people for some field work to be undertaken communally called *nbimbe/jakwara*. As people carry-out the work, they will be served with *doro* and that way people can spend the whole day working without realising the amount of time that they would have spent working and without feeling any hunger (Matutu 2014). *Jakwara* or cooperation was designed to cut on labour costs, enhancing efficiency and effectiveness and keeping people interacting in the rural areas (Dodo *et al* 2012). It is worth highlighting that this practice is still prevalent today in some districts of Zimbabwe such as Bikita. Due to the shortage of agricultural labour as a result of massive migration by most youths and able bodied people as well as the HIV and AIDS scourge, *nbimbe* becomes an effective strategy of pooling community labour in

agricultural activities for many households in Bikita (cf. Gukurume 2013).

Drought resistant crops

As noted by FAO (1997) and Chitonga (2013), communities that have lived under drought situations for many generations have developed coping strategies to minimise the impact of drought and ultimately famine. In Zimbabwe, some farmers especially those situated in regions IV and V are slowly discarding the idea of growing maize as the main crop, and are now shifting to the growing of traditional crops and or small grains such as sorghum (*mapfunde*), finger millet (*rapoko*) and pearl millet (*mbunga*). Finger millet is the third important crop next to maize and sorghum in the communal areas of Mashonaland, Midlands and Manicaland Provinces of Zimbabwe. It is referred by one of its vernacular names, such as ‘*rukwezha*’, ‘*njera*’ or ‘*zvinyo*’ (Seetharam *et al* 1986; Mawere, Mukombe and Mabeza 2013). The above-mentioned two semi-arid regions [IV and V] of Zimbabwe are characterised by low, erratic and poorly distributed rainfall of less than 650 mm/year (Leuschner and Manthe 1996). Sorghum, pearl millet and finger millet are drought resistant crops which are highly capable of producing good yields even with very little rain (see Shumba 2000). Sorghum and millet have been considered as staple food grains in many semi-arid and tropic areas of the world, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa because of their good adaptation to hard environments and their good yield of production (cf. Dicko *et al* 2005). Expanding the same idea, Taylor *et al* (2006) described sorghum and millet as the most drought-tolerant cereal grain crops that require little input during growth.

For Gukurume (2013) who carried out research in Bikita (one of the districts in Masvingo which falls under region IV), small grains and drought resistant crops like sorghum, millet and rapoko are increasingly becoming dominant crops on the premises that they are adaptable to both climate variability and

poor soils. This same idea has been reinforced by Chazovachii *et al* (2012) who argued that such crops are not only drought resistant but also tend to be resistant to pests and diseases that may threaten them. It should be underscored that rapoko, sorghum and millet are not only drought resistant crops but they double as both food and cash crops which enables smallholder farmers in drought prone areas to easily adapt to climate change and variability. Taylor (2003) concurs with this idea when he asserts that sorghum and millet have the potential to improve household food security in semi-arid regions because of their adaptability to such environments. The other advantage of growing drought tolerant crops such as rapoko, sorghum and millet is that they produce good yields even with irregular rainfall and can also be stored over a long period (that is, 2 to 3 years) without going bad (Mawere *et al* 2013). Against this background, drought resistant crops such as millet and sorghum besides being affordable even to the most vulnerable households enable farmers to save their own seeds year after year. Mudavanhu and Chitsika (2013) add that small grain seeds are easy to share and even to give those who do not have for free unlike the seed maize.

Musanganiswa wembeswa (Intercropping)

Many of the indigenous knowledge approaches to the mitigation of drought and famine in Zimbabwe included such technologies and practices as mixed cropping or intercropping also referred or known as polyculture. Intercropping is the growing of two or more crops on the same piece of land in the same growing season (Andrews and Kassam 1975). The rationale of growing two or more crops together with diverse growth habits and/or durations is for efficient exploitation of nutrients and water from different soil layers and more efficient light interception compared to a single crop (Mandumbu and Karavina 2012). It is also meant to minimize risks such that in the event that one crop fails the other one may be successful. For instance, mixing or intercropping maize

with other crops such as beans promoted not only efficient labour *and soil nutrient* utilisation but also lessened the risk of total crop failure since chances were that if one of the crops succumbed to environmental stress such as drought others would survive (see also Mwaura 2008). In fact, such indigenous practices were by and large used with various other methods of land use and management not only to promote higher yields but also to improve soil conservation. It is fundamental to note that mixed cropping or intercropping besides stabilising yields and preserving the soil also made it possible to harvest different crops at the same time. Apart from that, intercropping has also been found to have advantages such as the controlling of weeds. In Zimbabwe, intercropping has been used as a method of weed control as well as to maximise land use. As is widely known, manual weeding is the main weed control method used in the smallholder sector in Zimbabwe. However, Chivinge (1990) described this method of controlling weeds as slow, labour intensive, cumbersome and inefficient as compared to intercropping. Zoufa *et al* cited in Altieri (1995: 215) commenting on the same point asserted that intercropping is a good method of suppressing and controlling weeds while at the same time producing high yields. In addition, Akobundu cited in Altieri (1995: 215) highlighted that in terms of crop yields and weed suppression intercropping is the most effective method. In the same vein, Mapara (2009) articulates that intercropping is a cleaner and safer method of controlling weeds as compared to the use of herbicides because it has no negative impact on the environment.

Moreover, the other advantages of intercropping are that it reduces the susceptibility of crops to pests such as beetle pest species, green aphid and moths on cereal crops (see Midega *et al.*, 2010). Add to that, it also fosters better use of the soil in that the different crops grown require different light requirements or explore different depths of soil. Besides, the practice also tends to provide a complete vegetation canopy at different heights and thus broke up heavy rainfall and protects

the soil (see Mwaura 2008). Mixed cropping ensured abundance of food and maximum utilisation of land, thus traditional societies practiced intensified and diversified farming. It is fundamental to note that monoculture is a recent practice which was imposed on most indigenous farmers by the Europeans (Mapara 2009). Although most of the farmers fearing possible arrest followed this ‘new’ method of the European settlers, some continued to practice intercropping where more than one crop was planted in one field. Intercropping has proven to be a better agricultural practice when compared to monoculture in the sense that it helps among other advantages, maintain soil moisture and reduce soil erosion caused by run-off water.

Hunting and gathering of preservable fruits and vegetables

One of the most common ways in many African societies such as that of the Shona to cope with drought and famine was the gathering of wild fruits, namely the muchakata (*Parinari curatellifolia*), muzhanje (*Uapaca kirkiana* or *wild loquat*), and mutukutu/munjekenje/musekesa (*Piliostigma thonningii*) fruits. Wild fruits such as mazhanje/mashuku (*Uapaca kirkiana*), matamba (*Strychnos cocculoides*) and chakata (*Parinari curatellifolia*) often referred to as famine fruits gave the communities a lifeline during the times of adversity. Indigenous knowledge in wild vegetation and plants enabled villagers to pick fruits, berries and vegetables from the wild, which were an important source of minerals and vitamins and were usually available during the dry season which made them extremely useful in supplementing other foods (see also Mutasa 2010; 2011). In addition, the wild products also served as relief food during times of famine, and were seen as a free source of food. It is curious to note that there were a number of recipes for the preparation of household food supplements using the *chakata* fruits, *matamba* fruits, and others. *Parinari curatellifolia* fruits were used to bake cakes, their residue was mixed with boiled water

to make a tea substitute, and the pulp was crushed to make porridge and *mabewu* a common sweet brew. The seeds in the hard pod, known as *shombwe* in Shona, were roasted, salted, and eaten as a snack while the juice from the fruits known as *mapfura* were used for brewing beer called *mukumbi*. A history of the role of the *muchakata* tree and other such fruit trees in the social and cultural fabric of the Shona people in Zimbabwe made it possible to still depend on the fruits when faced with serious drought impacts such as drought and famine.

The other mitigating mechanism that was traditionally employed by the Shona people especially before the advent of colonialism was hunting. Hunting for toothsome wildlife, in fact, was done in all communities. In many pre-colonial Zimbabwean communities, this was carried out by groups of people using dogs, traditional weapons such as bows and arrows, spears, clubs, knobkerries, and slings as modern hunting weaponry such as guns were uncommon. There were periods of abundance of hunted wildlife and periods of extreme lack of the same. As such, communities devised several methods of meat preservation as they did with other food stuffs so that they could use these during times of scarcity, droughts and famine. Apart from that, another agricultural practice of the indigenous people of Africa that reflects their ingenuity in as far as scientific knowledge is concerned relates to food processing and preservation. Nyota and Mapara (2007: 6-8) also point out that pre-colonial Africa had some ways that its people used in preserving and preparing food especially meat and vegetables. Dried meat is called *chimukuyu* (biltong) while dried vegetables are called *musoni*/*mufushwa* respectively. This was to ensure that the meat and vegetables would not go to waste especially if these had been got in abundance at one time (Nyota and Mapara 2007). *Chimukuyu* could be made by cutting meat into long stripes. These were then sprinkled with salt or the ash of certain plants that were used as a substitute for salt. The meat was then hung to dry without being boiled. This was especially so if people

were out hunting in a *chiradzwa* (hunting expedition/safari) where they were away from home for a number of days. If the meat was from a domestic beast, it could be dried in the same manner described above, but it was usually boiled before being put out to dry (Mapara 2009). Similarly, vegetables were cut and dried, or they were first boiled and then dried. In the same manner, mushrooms (*hova*) had to be boiled first before being dried. Other eatable animals like fish were smoked while birds and other small animals like mice and hare were first boiled and then dried on the fire or also smoked (Mapara 2009).

***Kupemba* (Induced Begging)**

Traditionally, when confronted with drought and famine the people of Zimbabwe employed some of the coping measures such as *kupemba* and *kusunza*. Although *kupemba* (a diversity induced begging) and *kusunza* (grain purchases and/or trade) were prominent, they also banked on the support of social networks for non-food items in order to survive the wrath of droughts (Mutasa 2010). In as much as *kupemba* might sound an appalling and unacceptable practice, it was actually accepted in society further strengthening the social networks which are an integral component of the African society where one's problem becomes everyone's concern. In addition, it also depended on the values of the people in society where one's problem became everyone's burden. In light of the above, Mhondoro (1970) claims that the Shona are taught to share the little they have from a very early age, values that the people abide by even in times of adversity.

Use of matoro/dambos (wetlands) and river banks

In Zimbabwe as elsewhere in the region, erratic rainfall patterns and the economic meltdown have resulted in incredible hunger across the country causing, in turn, the intensive cultivation of *dambos/matoro*. Mabeza and Mawere (2012), assert that “dambo” is one of several dialectal terms used to describe the seasonally saturated, grassy, narrow

depressions covering as much as 20% of the plateau regions of Central and Southern Africa. They are part of a range of habitat types known as wetlands.

For Mabeza and Mawere (2012), while the history of dambo cultivation in Zimbabwe stretches back to the pre-colonial era, erratic rainfall patterns and the economic meltdown have forced the rural population to ‘invade’ even those dambos that were spared and traditionally reserved for cultural and aesthetic reasons. These wetlands play a key role in supporting fisheries, pasture and agriculture in general. Leask cited in Scoones and Cousins (1991) observed a hill surrounded by rice fields in low swampy areas in 1867. This substantiates the belief that the farming system of the Shona of Zimbabwe was dominated by intensive farming of wetlands. As previously highlighted, about 62% of people in the communal lands of Zimbabwe depend on dambo cultivation for their livelihoods (Dambo Research Unit 1987). This means that dambos constitute a critical source of livelihood sustenance for the rural communities.

Research carried out by Mabeza and Mawere (2012) in two communal areas of Zimbabwe namely Seke and Chitungwiza reveals that dambo cultivation started during the pre-colonial era, but intensified during the colonial period especially with the enactment of the Land Apportionment Act of 1930. The cultivation became even more intensive after independence due to the shrinking of the national economy and frequent droughts. As further revealed by Mabeza and Mawere (2012), during the pre-colonial and colonial eras, dambos were mainly used for growing crops for domestic consumption during the colonial era. Types of crops grown included rice and *tsenzwa* (*Coleus esculentus*). Rice was grown in furrows known in Shona as *mateka*. For Mabeza and Mawere, dambos were, thus, used for dry season cultivation to supplement grain grown in dry fields.

Use of *Masvikiro emvura/Manyusa* (Rain Spirit Mediums)

The communities have also been using *mikwerera* (rain petitioning ceremonies) to plan their agricultural activities. *Mukwerera* is the traditional beer that is brewed for rain petitioning ceremony, that is, a ceremony meant to petition rain from God through ancestors. Sexually inactive old women who are believed to be spiritually clean prepare the beer (Mawere 2012; 2013). It is normally conducted under a sacred *muchakata* or *muonde* trees, which, ironically, also provide wild fruits especially during food insecure seasons. The traditional beer is brewed by elderly women past menopause. Small grains, especially finger millet and sorghum are used for the beer brewing for the ceremony. Negating on these rules is often seen as part of the causes for droughts. It is usually during these rain-petitioning ceremonies that a special spirit medium (*svikiro*) known as *Nyusa* (rain petitioning spirit medium) delivers the message from the ancestors and God, particularly on the type of crops to grow, among other things. Some of the communities are continuing with the tradition of holding rain ceremonies, although they are no longer as frequent as in the past (Mutasa 2011; Mawere 2013). This is perhaps because of the impact of colonialism and modernity, which have made some to even question the spirit mediums' relevance and reliability in predicting rainfall patterns. As such, traditional Shonas claim that this questioning of the authorities has contributed to God and the ancestors holding back the rain contributing to the frequency of droughts (cf. Mutasa 2010).

Indigenous mechanisms for disaster mitigation in traditional societies in Zimbabwe: Insights for the future

The processes of urbanisation and globalisation have resulted in a dilution of values that inform and sustain the people living in rural areas. Although some indigenous knowledge systems still prevail in Africa, most of these systems

have failed to stand the test of time while others are gravitating towards extinction. For instance, rain making ceremonies were once very common as a drought risk reduction strategy, but with the increasing influence of Christianity, they have lost their popularity (Ndlovu n.d). The same is applicable to the *Zunde raMambo* concept. While *Zunde raMambo* is an appropriate community response to the problem of food insecurity, its effectiveness is being compromised by a shortage of land and the prohibitive costs of inputs. Furthermore, the harsh economic environment is making volunteering difficult as members struggle to meet their own basic needs (Kaseke 2006). The practice though still featuring in some communities in Zimbabwe was allegedly eroded by the colonial policies of land apportionment and the undermining of the traditional leaders' authority in the communities (Mutasa 2010; Mawere and Rambe 2012). Despite this shortcoming, there is no doubt that *Zunde raMambo* is improving the welfare of orphans, other vulnerable children and older persons in Zimbabwe's rural communities.

The weakening of these indigenous practices has consequently eroded the effectiveness of indigenous mechanism of disaster risk reduction in an age of globalisation. Interestingly, the introduction of the triumvirate of colonialism, Western education and Christianity impacted negatively on indigenous measures of mitigating drought and famine. The socio-political and cultural dimensions of the Western hegemonic tendencies in the world's global affairs have posed serious challenges, especially to its former African colonies. For Mawere (2010: 209):

The West considered Africa as a 'dark continent', and hence despised its traditions, customs, belief systems, and indigenous knowledge systems as diabolic, barbaric, and backward ... This consequently had a negative impact to Africa's own socio-economic and political development. As such, Africa's valued traditions and knowledge systems had

to change to fit in with the western scientism and modernity.

Apart from that, some of the drought mitigation mechanisms such as the growing of small grains have been viewed as labour intensive as the grains are prone to bird attacks. This situation is exacerbated by a shortage of labour due to migration and HIV/AIDS related illnesses.

Modernity also introduced commercial agriculture, which departed from the former subsistence economy (Boaten 1998). Modernism and Christianity have caused some people to shift completely from traditional beliefs. Some people, especially the young seek Western scientific explanation for many things these days. Yet, as Mawere (2010) argues:

The challenge is that the authority of science and its hegemonic influence on epistemology and knowledge production has undermined possibilities for other epistemological alternatives for explicating social reality or nature in ways that fall outside the frameworks of science [...] More importantly, despite the cultural onslaught on African thought, particularly their knowledge and belief systems through the spread of the western scientific worldview and the Christian religious tradition, the people of Zimbabwe never completely lost touch with their traditional thought and values.

Nevertheless, the traditional belief system has continued to inform much of the Shona people's life and activities (Mawere 2010). Though the traditional way of life of the Shona has been affected in a number of ways by the Western contacts, it is still largely regulated by their long lasting Ubuntu philosophy (Mawere 2012).

For the above reasons some developing countries such as Zimbabwe have included indigenous knowledge practices in their environmental policies and the school curricula. For

instance, Zimbabwe's environmental policy document, in keeping with global trends, has incorporated IKS as part of its strategy aimed at restoring this cultural heritage. Guiding Principle 27 of the policy states that:

Indigenous technical knowledge and traditional practices have a valuable contribution to make to the management and sustainable use of natural resources ... Its strategic direction seeks to achieve two goals, namely: to 'promote wider application of indigenous knowledge and practice in managing and using natural resources sustainably, particularly where they are integrated to local culture', and to 'encourage the documentation, dissemination and use of indigenous technical knowledge on management and sustainable use of natural resources'. Guiding Principle 28 of the policy document claims that 'Communities and individuals have the sovereign right to retain or share their indigenous technical knowledge and practices concerning the properties and uses of natural resources, and should, therefore, benefit equitably from any use of that knowledge' (GoZ 2009: 16).

Apart from that said, there is need to revisit the issue of food preferences to include traditional crops such as sorghum, pearl millet and finger millet. In fact, we recommend in this chapter that the growing of such crops as sorghum, rapoko, and millet should be promoted and market linkages for the same crops established to encourage farmers. In line with this recommendation, we further argue that there is need to bring on board rural communities in issues of drought mitigation and also recognise their innovativeness and experiences thus avoiding a situation whereby the said communities are looked down upon as passive disaster victims.

Last but not least, indigenous strategies and mechanisms should be incorporated into weather monitoring exercises as the indigenous knowledge "cannot be ignored or diminished in

any study of the emergence of drought-related crises” (Carr and Kettle 2009: 132). This is because indigenous strategies and mechanisms have a certain amount of flexibility in adapting to ecological change.

Conclusion

This chapter has made an attempt to demonstrate that the indigenous strategies and mechanisms in drought and famine disaster management that have evolved over centuries have been tested through time and proven to be effectively sustainable in both alleviating disasters and managing unavoidable hazards. These practices exhibit a deep understanding and ability of the Shona people to cope with disasters through local actions. However, fast population growth and new socio-economic impacts including science and technology as well as globalisation are now posing challenges to indigenous knowledge systems. It is clear that some hybrid incorporating indigenous knowledge systems and the new knowledge systems is required. We, thus, argue with Shaw *et al* (2008) that such practices *as indigenous strategies and mechanisms as those discussed in this chapter* must be acknowledged and will form the basis for a holistic approach to disaster reduction that links indigenous knowledge with modern technologies.

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Chapter 2

Indigenous Political Structures in Africa: Interrogating Rotational Kingship in Yorubaland vis-à-vis Political Crises and Terrorism in Nigeria

Pius Abioje

Introduction

The issue of who leads Nigeria as President, and where such a person comes from has been contentious on ethnic-religious grounds right from Nigeria's independence (October 1, 1960). In respect of religion, the problem is often resolved by making the deputy to be Christian if the principal (Governor or President) is Muslim, vice versa, in areas where Christianity and Islam are closely dominant. In predominantly Christian states, such as Anambra and AkwaIbom, or Muslim states, such as Sokoto and Kano, the minority Christians or Muslims often complain of marginalisation and oppression. As Atanda (1989: 186) notes:

One would expect religion to be a factor making for peace and stability in Nigeria. However, as the joint chapter by Ekoko and Amadi in this volume has revealed, it has been the opposite. Religious adherents have embarked on a policy of intolerance that has bred such serious conflicts that have rocked the stability of the nation.

The word "religion" in the quotation from Atanda above refers to Christianity and Islam, since the third most popular religion in Nigeria, African Traditional Religion (ATR), is basically non-political, at least in the Nigerian context. Christians and Muslims dominate Nigeria's political space. Hardly any politician of note identifies himself or herself as an adherent of ATR. However, the ethnic question has been

much more intractable, and accounts for crises and instability of serious and even fatal proportions. Newton (1992: 541) notes that:

The cry for independence rang loud during the '50s. The Northerners began worrying that the South's educational advantages would enable the Southerners to dominate the country. The British reacted by giving the Northerners even more regional autonomy. When independence finally came in 1960, the British solution was to divide the country into three regions, each governed by a party representing the majority in the region – the Hausa-Fulani in the north, the Yoruba in the southwest, and the Ibo in the south-east. It didn't work. Each region began governing itself as though it were a separate country.

Thus, the fear of who dominates Nigeria and where such a person comes from has been at the centre of Nigeria's politics since before and immediately after independence. This is aptly captured by Akinola (2012) who notes that:

The major feuds in the Nigerian polity since independence in 1960 have been mainly over leadership. Be it the Civil War of 1967-70 or the Gideon Orkar-led attempted coup of April 1990, or the crisis we now simply refer to as "June 12," it has been demonstrated in the course of our existence as an independent nation that the leadership question is indeed the national question.

The Civil War was, of course, preceded by the 1966 coup in which some of the most dominant northern leaders were killed, masterminded by some Igbo (erstwhile called Ibo) military officers. Reprisal and counter-attacks culminated in the Civil War. And after the war, some northern military officers became dominant. Even when the Army disengaged from military rule in 1979, power was handed to a northerner, President Shehu Shagari, who was later overthrown, and another military rule dominated by some northern military

officers was enthroned. Northern domination climaxed in the June 12, 1993 annulment of the presidential election believed to have been won by a Yoruba from the southwest, Alhaji Moshood Kashimawo Abiola (on June 12, 1993), alluded to by Akinola in his mention of “June 12” in the quotation just cited. The annulment made it possible for the military rule to perpetrate itself, while agitation for democratic civilian rule persisted from within and outside Nigeria. Eventually, a 1999 date was set for return to civilian rule again.

Based on the foregoing past negative experiences, some elders from all over Nigeria met in 1998 and adopted rotational presidency, south-north, towards peace and stability, without which sustainable development is neither imaginable nor possible. Although no document was produced after the meeting, since rotational presidency is not contained in Nigeria’s constitution, the current controversy testifies to the fact that rotational presidency was adopted. Beyond that, only mutual agreement on rotational presidency could explain the fact that in the presidential elections of 1999 and 2003, all the major political parties chose their presidential flag bearers from the southwest, and from the northwest in 2007. That means, the southwest was conceded two terms of four years each, before shifting to the northwest. The choice of the southwest as the starting point of rotational presidency was because the person (Chief M.K.O. Abiola) who was believed to have won the annulled presidential election (of June 12 1993) came from that zone. Many Nigerians were inclined to believe that the election might not be annulled if it were won by a northerner. The belief was that with rotational presidency, south-north, the past negative experiences of rivalry and marginalisation would become a thing of the past. Zoning and rotational presidency are synonymous expressions. Zoning refers to the fact that Nigeria has been subdivided into six geopolitical zones, to be discussed later in this chapter.

Rotational presidency was truncated twelve years after it was unofficially adopted, when the Vice-President, Dr.

Goodluck Ebele Jonathan (GEJ), from the south-south, who acted as President to serve the remaining period of President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua (from the northwest) who died, denied that there was anything like rotational presidency agreement. There was no signed document or constitutional provision to counter his denial. He contested and won the presidential election of 2011. It may not be out of place to imagine that GEJ used power of incumbency, which included financial and other resources at his disposal as acting President, to his own advantage in the presidential contest. What is incontrovertible is that, since he won the presidential election until now, Nigeria has been bedevilled with unprecedented terrorism. Indeed, the word "terrorism" did not exist in Nigeria's lexicon prior to GEJ's presidential victory, even though the name of the group, Boko Haram, by which the terrorists are known is said to date back to 2002. Wikipedia (2014) has it that "Boko Haram killed more than 5,000 civilians between July 2009 and June 2014, including at least 2,000 in the first half of 2014, in attacks occurring mainly in northeast, north central and central states of Nigeria." That manner of linking 2009 to 2014 is misleading, if not mischievous, because the Boko Haram uprising of 2009 was nothing but an uprising that was provoked by some Muslims who objected to the secluded life style of the then Bokoharamists. It happened during the presidency of Yar'Adua, who was himself a Muslim. After that uprising (of 2009), which was a reaction to provocation by their fellow Muslims who opposed their seclusion, nothing again was heard about Boko Haram until the riots that greeted the presidential election of GEJ in 2011. The riots graduated into terrorism. Akinyemi (2014) is suggestive on this in his letter dated December 16, 2014, written to GEJ (of the People's Democratic Party, PDP), and his popular rival in the impending 2015 presidential election, General MuhammaduBuhari –retired- (of the All Progressives Congress, APC). Akinyemi writes inter alia:

Shortly after his appointment as National Security Adviser, General Andrew Azazi, at his own request, met with me in my office in Lagos to discuss the state of the nation. It was on the eve of the 2011 elections. I told the General that I was not worried about the conduct of the elections or about the outcome which I expected President Jonathan to win. What really worried me, I told the General, was the management of the violence that would ensue after the elections. I was sure that there would be violence on a massive scale and I made some suggestions to him about how I thought the violence could be contained.

Akinyemi wrote the letter in view of another presidential election in 2015, and GEJ is again insisting on contesting to serve a second term. Indubitably, truncation of rotational presidency became a catalyst for terrorism in Nigeria, if only because it seriously wounded the sense of unity of many Nigerians, as feared by persons like Akinyemi (in the indented quotation). Since GEJ denied its existence, rotational presidency has become controversial, and has generated fairly substantial literature, particularly in newspapers and on the internet. My intention is to review the literature vis-à-vis rotational kingship in traditional Yorubaland, towards order, sustainable peace and progress of Nigeria. Even if one were to assume that terrorism has no connection with truncation of rotational presidency, it is still reasonable to say that the truncation wounded many minds and hearts and left Nigeria divided rather than united to withstand the onslaught of the terrorists. Alechenu (2014: 1) quotes Nigeria's former Vice-President, AtikuAbubakar, as lamenting that:

Can you imagine a whole country like Nigeria with its armed forces? Not one inch of territory recovered from the terrorists? How can you now convince me that this government has the capacity to recover an inch if in the last five years they have not recovered one inch?

Of course newspapers are daily full of similar lamentations, as Boko Haram bomb, kill and maim, kidnap, rape, and so on. My argument in this chapter is that rotational presidency can play for Nigeria, the same stabilisation role that rotational kingship has been playing in Yorubaland, from time immemorial, curbing, as much as humanly possible, inordinate ambitions.

There are many old and new written materials on traditional leadership and government in Africa. Among the old materials is a book by Holleman, *Chief, Council and Commissioner: Some Problems of Government in Rhodesia* (1969), while recent ones include an article co-authored by Mawere, Shava and Mabeza, “Traditional authority in community based natural resource management (CBNRM): A critical investigation of the role of traditional authority in fisheries management in GacheGache Communal Lands of Kariba, Zimbabwe” (2014). Due to the fact that rotational presidency is an ongoing controversy in Nigeria, I have relied heavily, but not exclusively, on internet and newspaper resources. Beyond literature, I have brought to bear participant observation as a Nigerian living in Nigeria. The study is exploratory and argumentative.

The rotational presidency controversy

Rotational presidency did not lend itself to any controversy before its truncation in 2011, even though it was not subject to any constitutional provision, but a gentleman agreement among some leading and highly influential Nigerian politicians. The denial of Dr. Goodluck Ebele Jonathan (GEJ) that the agreement existed sparked off the controversy. He comes from the south-south, while the northwest was expected to serve second term, after the first term tenure of President Umaru Musa Yar'Adua, who hailed from the north-west zone, but died before ending his first term. His Vice-President, GEJ, who served the rest of the term as an un-elected President,

denied that there was any rotational arrangement, so as to pave way for his own eligibility as a presidential contestant. His denial sparked off the controversy whether rotational presidency is worthwhile or a possibility to foster peace, unity and democracy in Nigeria. The fact that rotational presidency was not a big controversy before GEJ truncated it in 2011 is reflected in the realisation that no literature cited in this chapter dates back to earlier dates than 2011/2012, since nothing of such literature was found on the internet, archives, and other such secondary sources, since I started exploring the subject of rotational presidency controversy in Nigeria.

The controversy is well accentuated by some intellectuals, even though the motivation behind the submissions by the proponents and opponents cannot be easily deciphered. The principles of objectivity and value judgment have to be applied, notwithstanding that each debater tries to offer reasons for their arguments and positions. Egbosiuba (2013) seems to summarise and debunk all the arguments in favour of rotational presidency, when he writes that:

Rotational presidency based on ethnicity, race, religion or region in Nigeria may sound inclusive and a way to mollify aggrieved members of various groups. Coming from the south eastern part of Nigeria dominated by the Igbos, the most marginalized ethnic group in Nigeria (sic) politics since the end of the civil war, I still disagree with rotation of the office of the presidency. Rotational presidency is limiting, ill-advised and potential descent to mediocrity. It is imperative for Nigerians to come to the realization that we can only succeed if Nigerians conduct primary and general elections in a manner that will produce the most qualified and forward looking candidate. Nigeria is gradually overcoming the issue of election rigging which will ensure that the best candidate prevails after each election.

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to contend whether the Igbo constitute “the most marginalized ethnic group in Nigeria”. What is undeniable is that nobody from that ethnic group has been Nigeria’s Head of State or President since after the Civil War ended in 1970. Even then, an Igbo, Alex Ekwueme, was the Vice-President, when Nigeria returned to civilian rule in 1979, and the Senate presidency was zoned to the Igbo ethnic group, starting with Chuba Okadigbo, when the country again returned to civilian rule in 1999. Under the presidency of GEJ, the Igbo are particularly favoured, apparently because the south-south where GEJ hails from, and the southeast (Igboland) jointly fought the Biafran war against the rest of Nigeria, and they both complained bitterly of marginalisation since the war ended. Beyond that, GEJ used the south-south and the southeast collaboration in the Civil War to his own advantage in his truncation of rotational presidency. He incorporated the Igbo and his own south-south people. He appointed Dr. Mrs. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala (an Igbo) as the Finance Minister and coordinator of Nigeria’s economy. And another Igbo woman, Mrs. Diezani Alison-Madueke, is Nigeria’s Minister of Petroleum Resources. (Of course, there is no gender equality here, but the important issue is that corruption and mass abject poverty are tugging at Nigeria). The Governor of Nigeria’s Central Bank, Godwin Emefiele, is an Igbo, also appointed by GEJ. Similarly, the Secretary to the Federal Government, Anyim Pius Anyim, is an Igbo appointed by GEJ. Those are the most strategic positions in the Nigerian government and politics. The former President, General Olusegun Obasanjo (OBJ), from the southwest, also appointed Okonjo-Iweala as the Finance Minister, but she later resigned. GEJ invited her back after he was elected the President.

The crucial issue, however, is that many such important positions are occupied by Igbo appointees today that it is dishonest to be branding the Igbo as marginalised in today’s Nigeria, in the manner Egbosiuba has done, just to make himself appear objective in his opposition to rotational

presidency. Given all such important positions occupied by the Igbo in today's Nigeria, the submission of Egbosuiba (an Igbo) that "Rotational presidency is limiting, ill-advised and potential descent to mediocrity," becomes questionable in terms of motivation. It is not obvious that some ethnic groups are composed of only mediocres without some competent persons that can be elected as the President among them. Moreover, one would think that there is a limit to how the Igbo or any of the other two (Hausa/Fulani and Yoruba) largest ethnic groups can be marginalised in Nigeria. What appears to be true is that the north was controlling, in one way or another, Nigeria's topmost position since the Civil War ended in 1970 till 1999. In particular, no Igbo or anybody from the south-south succeeded in being Nigeria's President or Head of State. But the feeling of marginalisation was widespread and not limited to the two zones. Hence, the concerned elders opted for rotational presidency in 1998 to forestall future marginalisation of any section in respect of the topmost position. It is not impossible that Egbosuiba's position would have been different on rotational presidency if GEJ's presidency has not changed the political equations in favour of the Igbo. An anonymous writer who identifies simply as "Ayoka" (no date), to whom we shall return later, writes *inter alia* that: "If the truth must also be told, even most of our politicians do not believe in zoning, as they only talk about it when they feel it favours their aspirations." That refers to the issue of objectivity that is of serious concern on the controversy regarding zoning or rotation of Nigeria's presidency.

Nevertheless, Egbosuiba is not the sole opponent of rotational presidency, except that he is the only person I found on the internet who clearly identifies himself as an Igbo, and with two names. Another opponent identifies himself or herself simply as "concerned citizen" (2014). The material reads:

National Confab Sahara Reporters Media On Thursday, July 4th 2014; delegates at the ongoing National conference adopted a recommendation that allows for the rotation of Nigeria's presidency between the North and South, and among the six geo-political zones. Like many Nigerians I was shocked when I read about this recommendation in many newspapers, and online sources. My shock is not the news itself but the fact that such a ridiculous recommendation will even make it at the National Conference where at least I know we have some distinguished Nigerians there as delegates.

The main concern of the "concerned citizen" is stated thus: "My primary concern is the fact that many of us will never become the president of Nigeria even if we aspire to be." The person argues further that, "According to the electoral law in Nigeria, a person shall be qualified for election to the office of President if he or she is a Nigerian and has attained the age of 40 years." The argument of this researcher, as earlier indicated, is that measures are needed to control inordinate ambitions that can create disaffection and infuriate passions, even when the constitution does not envisage or provide for such predicaments. And there seems to be no better measure than order, which rotational presidency represents, as rotational kingship does in Yorubaland, for instance. Yet, another anonymous objector, named simply as "Ayoka" (no date), earlier cited, expresses the view that "Leadership is a serious business and should not be trivialized on the altar of zonal or sectional sentiments," since, according to "Ayoka," "We need to concentrate on competence and the capacity to deliver." The argument about "competence" is a familiar one. As Falobi (2014) notes, "critics of rotational presidency are of the view that if entrenched it can leads to selecting a mediocre as a leader". The proponents of rotational presidency thus seem to assume that there are some ethnic groups or zones in Nigeria that have no competent persons that can be elected as the President. One would think that that is preposterous.

Be that as it may, there is the other side of the coin, meaning those who propose or support rotational presidency. Among them is Senator Femi Okurounmu, quoted by Falobi (2014) as saying that rotational presidency would “give every zone the opportunity to produce the nation’s president.” That means rotational presidency would eradicate a feeling of marginalisation that ensues in rebellion or terrorism, such as Nigeria is currently going through in the Boko Haram imbroglio. Writing further, Falobi states how “Anthony Akinola, author of *Rotational Presidency*, was of the opinion that the system should be entrenched in the national Constitution, not least because of its potential to stabilise Nigeria’s severely divided society.” However, Falobi was only at that time reporting what was going on at the Nigeria’s national conference convoked by President Goodluck Ebele Jonathan (GEJ). As such, it is not surprising that GEJ’s delegates at the conference opposed rotational presidency, since that was what he (GEJ) truncated to pave way for his own election as the President. Hence, Falobi notes how Senator Nimi Bariagha Amange who represented GEJ’s federal government faulted “the inclusion of rotational presidency in the constitution”. Of course, one should not be surprised that the power that he had its way, and rotational presidency did not find its way into Nigeria’s constitution. Nevertheless, it seems good that some or many Nigerians saw the need for rotational presidency as an elixir for Nigeria’s peace, even though the current powers that be are opposing its entrenchment in the nation’s constitution, since they are benefitting from disorder. It can, thus, be hoped that one would buttress the value of rotational presidency by elucidating rotational kingship in traditional Yorubaland.

Rotational kingship in Yorubaland: An exemplary case for rotational presidency

The Yoruba political philosophy hinges on the belief that *Àìfàgbàfènikanni ò jáyé ó gún* (the world turns chaotic when we fail to submit to a chosen leader or a constituted authority – not blind submission of course). Based on that philosophy, *Yorupedia.com* (no date) is apt in noting that:

A major component part of Yoruba cultural system is the traditional institution of *Ọbaship*, *Baa’lẹ* (head of community under *Ọba*). Every Yoruba town, village, community has *Ọba* or (*Baa’lẹ*) as the case may be, selected from royal lineage or home, when the stool becomes vacant either by death or through removal which is seldom.

Awolalu and Dopamu (2005: 2) explain the point better, when they state that there are two categories of rulers in traditional Yorubaland: “the *Baale* who is the head of a village or ward,” and “there is the *Oba*, who is the over-all head of the town and all the villages under his jurisdiction.” The *Ọba*s held in high esteem to maintain decorum and social cohesion. As Awolalu and Dopamu (p. 232) further note, the Yoruba “refer to the king as *Aláṣe*, *ẹkejiòrìsà* – the commander, second only to the divinities,” and that the king is the one “who wields the sceptre, the deputy of the divinity,” and so, the king is “not merely a secular ruler, but he is derivatively a divine ruler” and “links his people to the ancestors, to divinities and finally to the Supreme Deity.” The king is, in other words, “regarded with religious awe,” as Awolalu and Dopamu conclude.

There is no intention to go into further details here than consider how selection of a king is done for social peace and stability, as reflected in Holleman (1952). One’s research revealed that once a town is found in Yorubaland, the founding heroes rotate kingship in order of age, level of involvement and/or valiance. At the death of the last of the founding

fathers, kingship is rotated among their families in the initial order of succession. Thus, for instance, Iwo-oyegbe.com (2000) notes that Iwo (a Yoruba town in Kwara state, not the Iwo in Osun state, both in Yorubaland) “The kingship is rotated among the first four compounds called Okeoniwo,” and they are: “Ile Oye, Ile Elemure, Ilenle and OdoOra.” That demonstrates African sense of equity in Yoruba worldview, as opposed to marginalisation that can result in rancour.

As long as the rotation is respected, political leadership peace is guaranteed, and the issue of equal social advancement is possible. The Iwo town that is being case-studied here has been lucky of being crisis free, at least since 1940 till 2000 when the material quoted here was archived on the internet. According to Iwo-oyegbe.com, the list of Oniwo of Iwo land from 1940 is as follows:

- *Oba TitiloyeIlufemiloye from Ile Oye (1940-1966)
- *Oba AminuIbidoja from OdoOra (1968-1986)
- *Oba Elijah Adunbarin from Ile Elemure (1987-1999)
- *Oba Arch. Joshua Olutade from Ilenla (2000-date).

That is the order of succession, and no other house can aspire to contest the kingship. It can be said to be democratic in the sense that it is a form of order that helps to sustain peace, and is accepted by the people. A similar point is made by Mawere and Mayekiso (2014). Yorupedia.com (no date) also notes that, “the selection of the new *Ọ*ba is done by the king makers in consultation with Ifa”. (Ifá is the divinatory apparatus of the most popular oracle in Yoruba tradition, *Ọ̀rúnmilà*). The selection system is exclusive in terms of eligibility, but it provides a form of sustainable order. Today, however, political indiscipline, borne out of egocentric instincts, is prevalent. Some princes who are inordinately ambitious try to circumvent and sabotage the selection regulations. An example is the case of Orile-Owu town, in Osun state, Yorubaland, in which Oba M.O.A. Adejobi died of

car accident, and one of his sons, Prince Olumuyiwa Oladunmoye Adejobi, started insisting that he should be crowned king, because the King's "demise was untimely, thus unnatural" and "his dreams had not been fully fulfilled," and that the only person who could fulfil the dreams would be one of his sons. The Prince, therefore, concludes, according to a report by Aderanti (2012) that:

Based on these aforementioned assertions, I, Prince Olumuyiwa Oladunmoye Adejobi of Afelele Ruling House, wish to register my interest and desired commitment to become the next Olowu of Orile-Owu. I want to succeed the late Oba M.O.A. Adejobi who did not complete his assignment before the untimely death, irrespective of any rotational schedule of ruling houses on ground.

All of that is typical of experiences of inordinate ambition that is tugging at rotational kingship in Yorubaland today, in which people look for all sorts of loopholes to truncate the system. In many instances, majority of the kingmakers side with rich princes, including princes who might have achieved their wealth through unscrupulous means. Thus the Aderanti's report has it also that a group of the youth of Orile-Owu who sided with Prince Olumuyiwa and "recognised the unwritten law concerning the existence of some ruling houses," argued nevertheless, that "there are no documents to buttress any rotational schedule of the Ruling Houses in Orile-Owu". Their own excuse is thus different from that of Olumuyiwa, but the target is the same, namely, to make Olumuyiwa succeed his father, in disregard for the other ruling houses. Yet, there is hardly any doubt that injustice breeds chaos, disaffection, disunity, and retrogression, just as Nigeria has been experiencing unprecedented devastating terrorism, since the truncation of rotational presidency in 2011.

Based on the foregoing, I recommend that rotational presidency be enshrined in Nigeria's constitution, to rotate

among the six geopolitical zones of Nigeria, south-north or vice versa. There are three zones in the north and three zones in the south. According to *Wikipedia* (no date), the six geopolitical zones were mapped during the military presidency of General Ibrahim Babangida, and that Nigeria's "economic, political and educational resources are often shared across the zones." Each of the zones comprises six states. Thus, North Central comprises Benue, Kogi, Kwara, Nasarawa, Niger, Plateau, and the Federal Capital Territory, Abuja. Northeast comprises Adamawa, Bauchi, Borno, Gombe, Taraba, and Yobe. Northwest comprises Jigawa, Kaduna, Kano, Katsina, Kebbi, and Zamfara. Southeast comprises Abia, Anambra, Ebonyi, Enugu, and Imo. South-south comprises AkwaIbom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, and Rivers, while Southwest comprises Ekiti, Lagos, Ogun, Ondo, Osun, and Oyo. Thus, some Nigerian leaders have always seen the need to create some order in Nigeria, and there seems to be no justifiable reason why that vision of order should not be enshrined in Nigeria's constitution.

Rotational presidency is indeed in tandem with Nigeria's federal character policy. The website of the Federal Character Commission (FCC, 2011) explains that:

The Federal Character Commission (FCC) is a Federal Executive body established by Act No 34 of 1996 to implement and enforce the Federal Character Principle of fairness and equity in the distribution of public posts and socio-economic infrastructures among the various federating units of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. The provisions of the 1999 Constitution in Sections 14 and 153 consolidated the establishment of the FCC for operation in a democratic system of Government.

The concern for "fairness and equity" cannot be carried to its logical political conclusion if one section of the country monopolises or appropriates to itself more than its own share

of the presidency, and not allowing it to rotate equitably south-north or vice versa. Thus, GEJ's presidential election in 2011 amounted to political inequity. OBJ, from the southwest spent eight years as the President, 1999-2007. He was followed by Umaru Musa Yar'Adua from the northwest who became ill and later died in office. Altogether, he did not spend more than two of four years as an active President, while the remaining two years was spent by his Deputy, Vice-President GEJ, from the south-south geopolitical zone, even though as Ochuko and Adomi (2011: 6) note, Yar'Adua's official period is recorded as from May 29, 2007-May 5, 2010 when he eventually died. That means that the southern section ruled Nigeria for not less than ten years against the only two of the northern section, between 1999 and 2011. That made it inequitable for GEJ or anybody from the southern section to be fielded in 2011 for the position of the President, if "fairness and equity" were consistently followed, as implied in the federal character policy, and intended by the proponents of rotational presidency. Obviously, GEJ took advantage of the death of Yar'Adua and used state resources to make the pendulum swing towards him in the presidential election of 2011. Not all northerners took that opportunism lying low, as evident in the activities of *Boko Haram*.

Before the final conclusion, I should say something on the argument of those who contend that Nigeria should be subdivided into eight and not six geopolitical zones. Omorotionmwan (2013) supports that view as he quotes one of the proponents (if not the proponent). He writes:

At various fora, Pharmacist Simon Owa, currently based in Benin City, Edo State, has consistently advocated the abolition of the six-zone structure and the establishment in its stead, an eight-zone structure, which will promote equity and stability. Hear him: 'We should build on a past that has been well defined and tested as a foundation for our continued existence, especially as it

affected the old minorities of the North, the West and the East before the civil war. Nature and equity have defined what zonal structure we should have starting from where we were in 1967'. Under the eight-zone arrangement, the North and the South will each have four zones. While the North will include the Northwest, North Central, Northeast and the Middle Belt; the South shall have the Southwest, Southeast, South-South and the Midwest.

One's observation is that there have been endless agitations and expressions of dissatisfaction about Nigeria's structure. The six geopolitical zones were proposed and accepted by people who knew Nigeria and her diversities. There is hardly any structural proposal that will not be contended by one group or another, and so, one would think that people should learn to live together rather than emphasising "the concepts of homogeneity and contiguity" (quoting again Omorotionmwan, 2013), as if human beings are irredeemably incompatible. How can endless agitation for structure bring progress? Omorotionmwan himself notes on the same web page that "Each time we attempt to redraw the political map of Nigeria, we get incrementally confused and our efforts yield only limited results". Why then should he think that adopting the eight zones proposal will end agitation, or that no other group would raise some other sets of objection?

Nigeria is a society of many ethnic groups, amalgamated as a nation in 1914 under the British colonial government, represented by Sir Lord Fredrick Lugard, who was the then governor-general. The diversity of Nigeria (defined as peoples around river Niger – Niger area) has been noted by many scholars. Ogundowole (2013) writes that:

During the conference that Pro-national Conference Organisation (PRONACO), convened to review the constitution, the technical committee established that there are only 102 or 101 ethnic groups in Nigeria. That is even

when some of the known ethnic groups were split into three, four or even five. Nevertheless, it came to only 101, 102 and not 250. The 250 must have been based on early survey made by foreigners who followed the activities of the colonial interlopers in Africa, trying to study the activities of the people without sufficient understanding of the old world.

Obviously, “101 or 102” is an indefinite figure in itself, and that is not really small. What is much more crucial, however, is how to engender and sustain unity among the diverse ethnic groups. One would thus contend that Nigerians accept the six zones and learn to live together, amicably and judiciously.

Conclusion

This study has discussed the fact that Nigeria has not been at peace since rotational presidency was truncated in 2011. The necessity for political discipline and taming of inordinate ambition cannot be wished away. The Yoruba say, *Ọba ì pèméjíláàfín, ijòyèlèpéméjáláàfín* (there cannot be two kings in a palace, but chiefs may be six in a palace). The figure “six” represents an indefinite number, meaning that chiefs may be as many as possible in a palace, while the King can only be one person. In other words, there will be crisis if all the eligible princes in a ruling house are over-ambitious about becoming the King. They would use conspiracy, stratagems and intrigues to eliminate one another, and there would be no social peace, stability and progress.

The foregoing justifies my position that the rotational kingship of African wisdom, as epitomised in rotational kingship in Yorubaland, should be a lesson in orderly political organisation of Nigeria. And, based on that wisdom, Nigeria’s presidency should rotate south-north or vice versa, from one zone in one section, to another zone in the other section after two terms of four years each, as the southwest had it (eight

years), 1999-2007, for instance. Unless inordinate ambition is tamed, it can create insurmountable upheavals, such as the *boko haram* terrorism that has been tugging at Nigeria since 2011 till date. I argue that even if truncation of rotational presidency was not responsible for the emergency of terrorism, which in my perception is the case, the coincidence is unmistakable, and the truncation is certainly making Nigeria to be too disunited and weak to fight the terrorists. Of course, each time rotational kingship is tampered with, crisis ensues also in Yorubaland. But, because of its official recognition, the aggrieved party could seek redress in court of law, as in the Orile-Owu example given in this essay. That makes it expedient for Nigeria to accord rotational presidency constitutional recognition, to make it justiciable.

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Chapter 3

Pan-Africanism, Marxism and Sustainable Development in Jacques Roumain's novel *Gouverneurs de la rosée* (*Masters of the Dew*)

Moussa Traoré

Introduction

Gouverneurs de la rosée (*Masters of the Dew*) is perhaps the most politically and socially engaged work by Jacques Roumain who was born in 1907 in Port-au Prince (Haiti). He is a young writer who did not live long but left an immense legacy to the next generations. The author travelled and studied in several European countries like Germany, Switzerland and England then returned home to Haiti with the aim of using the skills acquired during his various sojourns; his political activities led to his exile to Cuba and that time away from Haiti enabled him to meet several pan-African writers like Langston Hughes from America and W. E. B. Dubois. Roumain was a writer, and also an activist with a resilient spirit and his political views and activities landed him in prison in 1929 and several other times since the conservative authorities in Haiti at that time saw his writings and utterances as a threat to the stability of their government. In his first literary work, *La Proie et l'ombre*, (1930) Roumain openly states that he is a leftist. He strongly opposed the USA occupation of Haiti and founded the Haitian Communist Party in 1934. When the political situation in Haiti became less hostile to him, he returned and occupied several political positions as ambassador of Haiti first to Mexico and then later to several other countries. That was the time when Roumain published most of his works, including his collection of poetry *Bois D'èbène* (*Ebony Woods*) (1931). One can say that

much of Roumain's *Gouverneurs de la rosée*, translated into 18 other languages---including Czech, Danish, German, Portuguese and Vietnamese--is implicitly autobiographical, expresses the frustration and rage of the downtrodden across the world. The author includes "the masses" in his writing and calls on the poor to organize, strategize and fight for better living conditions, a task which is very similar to what Frantz Fanon does in two of his writings, *Black Skin White Masks* (1967) and *The Wretched of the Earth* (1968). The first work deals with the mental alienation of the colonized and the second one dives into the dynamics of the rivalry and combat that exist between the colonizer and the colonized. In view of this general trend as far as the focus of his work is concerned, this chapter examines pan-Africanism in Jacques Roumain's novel, class struggles from the pan-Africanist angle as it is articulated by Kwame Nkrumah, Julius Nyerere, Paul Gilroy and others, and the self-sacrifice done by Manuel the protagonist in the novel in his efforts to put an end to oppression and poverty in Fonds -Rouge, his hometown in particular, and Haiti in general.

Critique of French Imperialism: The Haitian Revolution and *Gouverneurs de la rosée* (*Masters of the Dew*)

Jacques Roumain's novel sheds light on the socio-historical progression of Haiti, as the first black republic of the world, the first black nation to fight the French colonizer and gain autonomy. Led by Toussaint L'Ouverture, the Haitian revolution (1791–1804) remains one of the most organized liberation movements in world history. The Haitian Revolution was a slave revolt in the French colony of Saint-Domingue, which culminated in the elimination of slavery in that colony and the founding of the Republic of Haiti. The Haitian Revolution was the only slave revolt which led to the founding of a state. Furthermore, it is generally considered the most successful slave rebellion ever to have occurred and as a

defining moment in the histories of both Europe and the Americas. The rebellion began with a revolt of black African slaves in August 1791 and ended in November 1803 with the French defeat at the battle of Vertières. Haiti became an independent country on January 1, 1804. C.L.R. James's *The Black Jacobins* (1938) thoroughly studies the slave revolution in Haiti.

However, the contrast lies in the fact that the first black republic of the world which brought pride and dignity to blacks all over the world found itself some years along the line as a society in "decomposition": betrayal among neighbours, massive unemployment, abject poverty and migration of the youth in search of greener pastures. *Gouverneurs de la rosée* opens with a horrendous tableau of the need and want which is rampant in the land. The novel questions the existence and the role of God in such a context. One might read in such a text the Marxist and atheist position of the author. He seems to pose that God is insensitive to the plight of the living and the reader can push the argument further here by stating that Roumain implicitly asks whether God exists or is worth worshipping. The narrator adopts a position that is reminiscent of that of the British philosopher Bertrand Russell in his essay which was published several times as a pamphlet titled *Why I am Not a Christian* (1927). In the work, Russell presents his understanding of the word "Christian," and adds why he does not believe in God and immortality and refutes the fact that Christ was the best and wisest of men. Russell therefore denies those two things that make a person a Christian. He favours Darwinism and questions the morality of religion which he thinks is based on fear. Similarly, *Gouverneurs de la rosée* ridicules the people's prayers and God's reaction to those prayers. Prayers are rather qualified as "loud noise" (Roumain 1946: 11) that angers God in the novel. Délira prays and calls on God to come to their rescue but God does not, He is rather irritated and disturbed by so much cacophony coming from all angles. The dire living conditions persist in the land, Fonds- Rouge.

The old couple, Délira and Bienaimé live in an environment where drought, hunger and hopelessness rule. Suffering drives the old lady to the brink of insanity. Death is looming. The land is dry, dust reigns over everything and there is no hope of getting food or drink. That portrayal is rendered more striking by the conversation between the couple: “Nous mourrons tous: les bêtes, les plantes, les chrétiens vivants, ô Jesus-Maria la vierge; et la poussière coule entre ses doigts”(p.11) [We are all dying: the animals, trees, living Christians, Jesus-Mary the virgin; then dust fell through her fingers]. This difficult life condition is understood by the couple as abandonment by God. They think that God is not there for them and that He has shut his ears and left them to their fate, as Délira says: “Mais c’est inutile parcequ’il y a si tellement beaucoup de pauvres créatures qui hêlent le bon Dieu de tout leur courage que ça fait un grand bruit ennuyant et le bon Dieu l’entend et il crie: Quel est, foutre, tout ce bruit? Et il se bouche les oreilles. C’est la vérité et l’homme est abandonné” (p.11). [This is of no use since there are so many poor creatures calling onto God with all their strength and that produces an annoying noise that God hears and shouts: why all this noise? then He closes his ears. Man is really abandoned].

There is a striking similarity between the condition of the human body in *Gouverneurs de la rosée* and Emile Zola’s *Germinal* (1884). A whole family works in the coal mines in *Germinal* in poor conditions, with workers spitting “blacks substances” (p.33) as a result of their lungs being filled with coal particles. The characters at the beginning of *Gouverneurs de la rosée* render a no better image: Délira and Bienaimé are thin, hungry and sick. Délira describes the state in which her body is in these lines: “Tout mon corps me fait mal, tout mon corps accouche la misère, moi-meme” (p.12). [My whole body is painful, my whole body epitomizes only one thing: misery]. Her husband coughs like Bonnemort the poor coal mine worker in *Germinal*: “Bienaimé tousse rudiment. Il voudrait peut être dire quelque

chose” (p.12) [Bienaimé coughs loudly. He might have wanted to say something].

The reader can see here the radical view of the writer, the fact that the narrator describes in details the poor living conditions of the people in Haiti. The radical Marxist position of the author also transpires through the same lines. In *Germinal*, the majority of workers were toiling for the owners of the coal mine and here the reader wonders if Bienaimé and Délira are living in a country where a leader exists, a country where people’s living conditions are considered. The atmosphere in the novel is one of total hopelessness; human beings are abandoned to linger in misery. That reveals Jacques Roumain’s position as an activist, a spokesperson for the downtrodden. He condemns the French government which has occupied Haiti, and the reader can see imperialism at its best. The occupying power rules and the populations die of need and want whilst the imperial power is profiting from the exploitation of the colonized.

Marxism in the novel under study

Marxism is one of the theories in which this work is anchored. This theory is relevant here for two reasons: it enables a thorough examination of the novel under study and becomes one of its central themes, and Marxism-and leftist ideology in general- is also linked to pan-Africanism, the second theoretical framework used in this study. The connection between Marxism and pan-Africanism is articulated by Kwame Nkrumah and Amílcar Cabral as we will see later in this chapter. A working definition of Marxism can be found in “Karl Marx: From the German Ideology” by Charles Caplan and William Anderson (2000). They clearly explain Marxism, equating it to Marx’s philosophy which they describe in these terms: “In contrast to idealist philosophy, which concerns itself primarily with the world of the mind, ideas, and the transcendent, Marx’s philosophy is materialist, empirically

grounded in the concrete world of work and economic relationships, rejecting metaphysical explanations. Few would dispute that such things as housing, clothing, and consumption of material goods are determined in large part by economic factors” (Kaplan & Anderson 2000: 310). The reference to economic relationships, housing, clothing and consumption of material goods speaks to what Délira and Bienaimé lack, on the first pages of *Gouverneurs de la rosée*. The oppression that the French subjected Haiti to is clearly mentioned in the following section, where the French political machinery and its means of self- defense exist. A “peaceful” and docile French colony is portrayed and Manuel, the young man who speaks of liberation, and anti-colonialism, is seen as a serious threat that must be eliminated: “La première chose à faire, c’est de s’assurer de Manuel. De toute manière, c’est un mauvais élément, un nègre dangereux qui causait des paroles de rebellion aux habitants....ce Manuel est contre la loi et l’ordre établi, il est contre le gouverneur”(p.142). [The first thing to do is to get rid of Manuel. He is a real bad element, a dangerous Negro who was talking to people about rebellion. This Manuel is against the established order and the ruling government].

Manuel, who is the son of Délira and Bienaimé, is the catalyst for the revolutionary change. He is the activist whose parents wonder whether he is alive or not, or where he is, if he is alive. The old couple who wallow in poverty think that their son is dead, although before setting off, he had mentioned to his parents that he was heading to Cuba, to work on the sugar plantations: “Il ya si longtemps qu’il est parti, il doit être mort maintenant, songe-t-elle. La vieille Délira pense à son garçon. Manuel qu’il s’appelle, parti il y a des années couper la canne à sucre à Cuba” (p.22-23). [He left such a long time ago, he might be dead by now, she told herself. Old Delira thinks about her son. His name is Manuel and he left several years ago, to cut sugar canes in the plantations in Cuba]. Manuel is the prototype of the Prometheus character, the one who takes upon himself to seek what is happening in other areas and

brings back to his homeland, what he has acquired abroad. The reader can also see in Manuel the one who educates the masses and the oppressed when it comes to their rights so that the army of the oppressed, the factory workers and the downtrodden can be galvanized to carry out the revolution which Karl Marx terms *the victory of the proletariat*. Manuel also represents that youth whom Frantz Fanon is addressing in his work *Toward the African Revolution* (1964). Although Fanon refers to the colonized in general and the Algerians in particular, and despite the fact that Fanon's works were written long after the publication of *Gouverneurs de la rosée*, Fanon's works were concerned with colonization and exploitation in all its forms and all its locations. So his analysis can be applied to Haiti which is more than a colony, it is an occupied land to which the French were as attached as they were to Algeria. The following statements by Fanon on Africa and Algeria can also be applied to Haiti:

The colonized peoples have generally recognized themselves in each of the movements, in each of the revolutions set into motion and carried through by the oppressed. Beyond the necessary solidarity which the men who, throughout the earth, are fighting for democracy and respect for their rights, there has been, with unaccustomed violence, the firm decision of the colonized peoples to want for themselves and their brothers the recognition of their national existence, of their existence as members of an independent, free, and sovereign state (Fanon 1964: 114).

In that struggle for self-assertion, Fanon assigns a special role to the youth and Manuel; Manuel in the novel under study, is one of those young people. In *Toward the African Revolution*, Fanon throws to them a direct call to arms:

Youth of the French colonies! For four years we have constantly repeated to those who sit in the French Assemblies that French colonialism will not yield to any magic operation and that it is futile to hope for its progressive disappearance. The future will have no pity for those men who, possessing the exceptional privilege of being able to speak words of truth to their oppressors, have taken refuge in an attitude of passivity, of mute indifference, and sometimes of cold passivity (Fanon 1964 : 116-117).

Manuel in *Gouverneurs de la rosée* acts exactly as one of those youths that have heeded the type of call Fanon addresses to young Africans regarding the issue of colonization and liberation. Manuel's migration to Cuba represents first of all the power that lay in the hands of the European powers in the Caribbean in the 18th century, since people moved from one territory to another as labourers seeking the greener pastures (that belong to the Spanish in Cuba in this case). Forced migration is one of the consequences of the hardship in the land. Manuel's trip is important because it turns the young man into an activist full of experience, an organizer of the local community for better living conditions and collectivism, the opposite of what Délira and Bienaimé are going through. Manuel's departure to Cuba is therefore a landmark in the novel. Parental emotions are heightened when the young man is leaving for Cuba and when his parents spend several years without any news from or about him, sorrow fills their heart. Roumain carefully captures the price that Manuel had to pay in the sugar plantations in Cuba, the experience that the young man brought to Haiti was not acquired in a cheap way:

Quand, sous le matraquage des Guardes Ruraux il sentait ses os craquer, une voix inflexible lui soufflait: tu es vivant, tu es vivant, mords ta langue et tes cris car tu es un homme même pour de vrai, avec ce qu'il faut là où il en

faut. Si tu tombes, tu seras semé pour une récolte invincible. “Haitiano maldito, negro de mierda” hurlaient les gardes. Les coups ne faisaient même plus mal. A travers un brouillard parcouru de chocs fulgurants, Manuel entendait comme une source de sang, la rumeur inépuisable de la vie. (Roumain 1946, pp.34-35). [Although he could feel his bones breaking under the whips of the Local Guards, a strong voice kept telling him: you are alive, you are alive, bite your tongue and swallow your cries because you are a man, a real man who possesses what a man must have, and at the right place. If you succumb, you will be forgotten forever. The overseers kept shouting “*Haitiano maldito, negro de mierda*”. He was not feeling their blows anymore. Manuel could hear only the unquenchable sound of life in his blood].

Pan-Africanism is a key notion in *Gouverneurs de la rosée* if we consider one of the numerous definitions of pan-Africanism. Kofi Anyidoho, Kwame Nkrumah and Paul Gilroy see in pan-Africanism more than the union of African counties after independence. For these scholars, pan-Africanism also means and above all, the relations between Africa and the Black Diaspora, or the projection and representation of African values on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean. Continental African culture and values are central in *Gouverneurs de la rosée*.

Pan-Africanism in *Gouverneurs de la rosée*

The concept of pan-Africanism in general came into being in the 18th century when Prince Hall and Paul Cuffe initiated the movement to repatriate Blacks from the USA to Sierra Leone. Pan-Africanism is also associated with a series of pan-African conferences which took place in Europe (in London in 1900 and in Paris in 1919 called by W.E.B. Dubois), in America (the Chicago Congress on Africa in 1893), and Africa--especially in Ghana--where Kwame Nkrumah

organized several pan-African conferences between 1958 and 1966 (Esedebe 1982). Pan-Africanism is also associated with the growing opposition to British imperialism in the wake of the Berlin Conference of 1884, and it finds expression in Marcus Garvey's Universal Negro Improvement Association, or the UNIA during the 1920s and following decades (see Omi and Winant, 1986). Historically, pan-Africanism has attempted to integrate the mosaic of newly independent African countries and has reflected the complex relations between continental Africans and diaspora Africans (Sidney Lemelle and Robin D.G. Kelley 1994). Esedebe (1982) captures the multiple and often contradictory understandings associated with pan-Africanism when he writes that it is impossible to give an accurate definition of pan-Africanism in a short sentence. He rather poses a list of major concepts and ideas which characterize pan-Africanism: "Africa as the homeland of Africans and persons of African origin, solidarity among men of African descent, belief in a distinct African personality, rehabilitation of Africa's past, pride in African culture, Africa for Africans in church and state, the hope for a glorious future Africa" (Esedebe 1982: 3).

Our understanding of pan-Africanism in this chapter is based on the definition that Kofi Anyidoho assigned to the terms in his work: *The Pan-African ideal in literatures of the Black World* (1989). Anyidoho clearly poses that pan-Africanism means talking about the black world, the various areas where blacks live, how they got there, but also and above all, the current conditions in which blacks live, all the world over. Anyidoho (1989) issues the following caution: "We must be careful not to dwell only on where black people may be found in significant numbers, but also on how they got to these places in the first place, and finally the conditions under which they live. More than where they live and how they got there, it is the circumstances of their life that constitute the single most important factor in the determination of the Pan-African ideal and the literary expressions of that ideal".(Anyidoho,1989 p.2) .

For Anyidoho, pan-Africanism involves all of the victims of the transatlantic slave trade, the victims who died during the middle passage, those who were successfully transplanted onto a new location, those who were complicit and profited from that gruesome trade, and also those who were left behind. He adds that this common experience establishes one of the driving forces of pan-Africanism, which is memories of horror, trauma of slave raids, dark dungeons, a journey of no return and also the quest for wholeness. Anyidoho's treatment of the diasporan blacks' consideration of Africa and their connection to Africa will guide our treatment of the theme of pan-Africanism in this chapter.

It is important to note that several writers and political figures have anchored their work on pan-Africanism and their view and understanding of that term is not different from that of Kofi Anyidoho, although their vision is most of the time thought of as a more political one and that can be explained by the fact that they were political leaders; some of those leaders are, among others, Kwame Nkrumah from Ghana, Amilcar Cabral from Guinea Bissau and Julius Nyerere from Tanzania, Black Diasporans like C. L. R. James from Trinidad and Tobago and the Black British Paul Gilroy also have a voice in this discussion since continental pan-African leaders interacted with most of them several times (especially C.L. R. James and W.E.B. Dubois).

Anyidoho's definition of pan-Africanism is cantered on the daily living conditions and mental-psychological-state of Blacks wherever they are and the same notion is at the core of Kwame Nkrumah's treatment of the theme of pan-Africanism. First of all he was advocating the union of all African states for better conditions for Africans, but he was also and above all concerned by the connection between continental Africa and the black Diaspora. Nkrumah started by stressing political independence, economic emancipation, while recommending the strategies that can counteract the colonial imperialistic powers and he calls for the alliance of colonial territories. In

Towards Colonial Freedom (1962) Nkrumah lays out key points of his political and pan-Africanist agenda in the following terms:

Political independence is an indispensable step towards securing economic emancipation. This point of view irrevocably calls for an alliance of all colonial territories and dependencies. All provincial and tribal differences should be broken down completely. By operating on tribal differences and colonial provincialism, the colonial powers' age-long policy of 'divide and rule' has been enhanced, while the colonial national independence movement has been obstructed and bamboozled. The effort of colonial peoples to end colonial exploitation demands the eager and earnest collaboration of all of them. They must bring into service all their energies, physical, mental, economic and political (Nkrumah 1962: xv-xvi).

Marxism is at the centre of Nkrumah's pan-Africanism since he perceives pan-Africanism as a movement or ideology which aims at a holistic well-being and liberation of all blacks, and such an ideology is sustained by a very good mastery, understanding and subsequent destruction of the imperialistic machinery. In the same book, Nkrumah points out the importance of Marxism, as I pointed out in the section on Marxism --and he adds Leninism to it--in the struggle of the dominated or colonized territories. He writes: "The most searching and penetrating analysis of economic imperialism has been given by Marx and Lenin. According to the Marx-Lenin point of view, economic imperialism is not only the natural stage in the development of the capitalist system, but its highest stage in which the inner contradictions and inconsistencies of the system foreshadow its doom and demolition" (Nkrumah 1962: 11). In the same vein, Amílcar Cabral, one of the main figures of the pan-African movement and close ally to Nkrumah formulated his view on pan-Africanism, adding a revolutionary dimension to it. He states

that the working class must be at the forefront of the fight against imperialism, an action which must take place before pan-Africanism can become a reality. Cabral recommends both 'legal' and 'para legal' means in the revolutionary pan-African combat which means that all forms of resistance and struggle are allowed in this fierce battle against imperialism. In his article "Amilcar Cabral and the Theory of Class Suicide," Nang Nubuor explains Cabral's Revolutionary pan-Africanism in the following terms: "Revolutionary pan-Africanism directs its arsenals at the ultimate destruction of the neo-colonial states of all existing African neo-colonies. In their stead is built a single socialist People's Republican State of Africa under the leadership of the working class" (Online material).

Julius Nyerere is also one of the major forces behind the pan-African movement. As the founder of the OAU in 1963, he played a pivotal role in African affairs in the 1970s and his contribution to the pan-African movement cannot be underrated; like Amilcar Cabral who added a revolutionary dimension to the pan-African movement and put the working class at the forefront, Julius Nyerere's pan-Africanism has its own special features which add up to that of Nkrumah and Cabral: Nyerere saw the fight against apartheid as an urgent case and his political program, the Arusha Declaration, still guides many of the socio-political activities and organizations in the developing world in general and in Africa in particular. He was committed to the creation of an egalitarian socialist society based on agriculture. Nyerere collectivized farm lands, launched mass literacy campaigns, instituted free and universal education, and emphasized the need for Tanzania to become economically self-sufficient and do away with foreign aid. All that socialist experimentation was lumped under a single name, Ujamaa which in Swahili means "familyhood". It is a blend of economic cooperation and racial and tribal harmony, a policy of the type advocated by Kwame Nkrumah. Although Nkrumah and Nyerere were towering figures of pan-Africanism, one cannot fail to notice that they arrived at pan-

Africanism through different intellectual and political routes: Nyerere found pan-Africanism through Tanganyikan nationalism and Nkrumah found Ghanaian nationalism through pan-Africanism. The former's anti-colonialism was relatively moderate-probably because his education was influenced by Christian missionary activities and he had a lot of interaction with the Labour Party while living in the UK- and his approach to change was a gradual one, while Nkrumah went to Lincoln College in the US where he experienced open racism and spent summers with great African American writers like W.E.B. Dubois, George Padmore and C.L.R. James. In his article titled "Being both king and philosopher" in *Pambazuka News*, Issa G. Shivji captures the difference and also complementarity in the pan-Africanist approaches of Nkrumah and Nyerere in these lines:

Nkrumah's anti-colonialism was grounded in his understanding of the political economy of imperialism; his approach to independence was radical. Nkrumah ended up writing a great treatise: *Neocolonialism: the Last Stage of Imperialism*. Mwalimu (Nyerere) authored the Arusha Declaration: Socialism and Self-Reliance. If the Arusha Declaration had had a subtitle in the stagiest language of Kwame Nkrumah, it would have been something like--to borrow from the words of C.L. R. James--'Socialism and Self-Reliance: The Highest Stage of African Resistance'. C.L.R. James once described the Arusha Declaration as 'the highest stage of resistance ever reached by revolting blacks' (*Pambazuka News* 2009-05-07 Issue 43).

Among the diasporan scholars who engaged the theme of pan-Africanism, I find the position of Paul Gilroy in his work *The Black Atlantic* (1993) to be very interesting and worth pondering over. He calls for a recognition and celebration of the "brassage" and hybridity that continental African values underwent on the other side of the Atlantic and advises readers

against an essentialism that uplifts only African culture and by doing that looks for a certain “purity”. Gilroy’s main criticism is that although the works of certain Diasporan figures like Olaudah Equiano, Ignatius Sancho and Phillis Wheatley are initially associated with “anterior purities,” they also contain signs and features of hybridity, or the “syncretic complexities of language, culture, and everyday modern life in the torrid areas where racial slavery was practiced, but also the purity-defying metamorphoses of individual identity in the contact zones of an imperial metropolis” (Gilroy 1993: 117). His analysis of pan-Africanism moves from the Afrocentric or Africanist perspective onto the diasporan perspective which uplifts the compound, complex and multidimensional character of pan-Africanism. One can read in Gilroy’s work a magnification of a previous connection that the Senegalese Senghor had initiated in his negritudinist thoughts and writings. Although the Negritude movement was founded by Africans and Diasporans (Senghor, Césaire and Léon G. Damas), a fissure appeared at some point between Senghor and his Caribbean counterparts and that further led to the concepts of “Negritude Senghorienne” and “Negritude Césairienne,” the first one being the characteristic of Negritude according to Senghor and the second one referring to the distinctive features of Césaire’s understanding of Negritude. Césaire thought that Senghor was being less active and too “theoretical” in his negritude writings; Césaire was of the view that more action was rather needed to sustain Negritude. Several African writers made the same comments against Senghor and his negritude. Wole Soyinka for instance thought that everybody knows that Africans are black, so there is no need to “sing” it; he thought that African writers (especially sub-Saharan ones, who are obviously black) should rather devote their energy to the depiction and combat of the excesses and injustices of colonization on the African continent.

Like Gilroy, Senghor stresses the need to recognize the common experience that the Caribbeans and the Africans have,

and he accuses Césaire of ignoring that common experience and distancing himself from Africa. In his poem “Letter to a Poet/To Aimé Césaire,” Senghor elucidates what he thinks needs to be added to Aimé Césaire’s writings in order to make them more Africa-related. Senghor uses the imagery of the Atlantic and the traffic that takes place on those waters to stress the bond that naturally exists between him and Césaire. The first part of the poem-- in Melvin Dixon’s English translation-- shows Senghor acknowledging Césaire’s talents:

Black sea gulls like seafaring boatmen have brought me
a Taste

Of your tidings mixed with spices and the noisy
fragrance of Southern Rivers

And Islands. They showed your influence, your
distinguished brow,

The flower of your delicate lips (“Letter to a Poet / to
Aimé Césaire,” p.1).

The “business-like” tone of the poem is however set in the first verse where Senghor sends a “bluntly fraternal greeting to his friend Césaire”. Senghor proceeds to accuse Césaire of forgetting his African roots:

Have you forgotten your nobility?

Your talent to praise the Ancestors, the Princes,

And the Gods, neither flower nor drops of dew?

(“Letter to a Poet,”p1).

Senghor further points out clearly what he thinks should be Césaire’s task, and he also recalls from his memory the royal treatment that he and Césaire used to enjoy in Africa:

You were to offer the Spirits the virgin fruits of your
garden [...]

At the bottom of the well of my memory, I touch your
face

And draw water to refresh my long regret.

You recline royally, elbow on a cushion of clear hillside

("Letter to a Poet,"p.1).

The poem ends with Césaire's return to the "rendez-vous" that Senghor invites him to, which is the type of writing that recalls, sings, and celebrates Africa:

My friend, my friend- Oh, you will come back, come back!

I shall await you under the mahogany tree, the message
Already sent to the woodcutter's boss. You will come back

For the feast of first fruits when the soft night
In the sloping sun rises steaming from the rooftops
And athletes, befitting your arrival,

Parade their youthfulness, adorned like the beloved
("Letter to a Poet,"pp.1-2).

These lines provide a picture of the pan-African scene one the African continent and also to some extent, in the black diaspora which is the setting of the novel under study. What I intend to state here is that the examination of the theme of pan-Africanism in *Gouverneurs de la rosée* is informed by the connection that exists between continental Africa and the black Diaspora, and that connection is strongly represented by the presence of African culture, values and practices in *Gouverneurs de la rosée*, a novel written by a diasporan, a novel whose setting is across the Atlantic, in Haiti.

Africa is an omnipresent element in the novel under study. All blacks refer to the continent and in diverse circumstances. They do not hesitate to assert their African origin, they pray to African gods and spirits to rescue them from the hunger, starvation and hostility they are going through. One can therefore confidently say that Africa is "the promised land" in *Gouverneurs de la rosée*. People call on to **Loa** whom they refer to as the African divinity that can help the land with rains and the sustenance of life: "on prie pour la pluie, on prie pour la recolte, on dit les oraisons des saints et des **loas**" (47). [we pray for the rain to fall, we pray for good harvest, we sing praises of

the Saints and the **loas**]. Délira calls on to the African gods, especially those from Guinea for fruitful harvest before she plants her maize seeds: “Avant de semer le maïs, au lever du matin, devant l’oeil rouge et vigilant du soleil, elle avait dit au Siegneur Jesus- Christ, tournée vers le levant, aux **Anges de Guinée**, tournée vers le Sud, aux Morts, tournée vers le couchant...” (p.54). [Before planting corn, early in the morning before the sunrise, she (Délira) had prayed to Lord Jesus Christ while she was turning toward the East, to the **Angels of Guinea** while she was facing the South, had solicited the help of the spirit of the dead while she was facing the West...]. **Legba** is known in the novel as the ancient god from Guinea who opens the path for people anytime they find themselves in difficult situations. His presence is acknowledged in the following line: “Et **Legba** était déjà là, le vieux dieu de Guinée” (p.60) [And **Legba** was already there, the Great God of Guinea]. Voodoo priests are worshipped and **Whydah**, one of the most revered spiritual sites in **Dahomey** (today’s Benin) are a source of pride in the work. The Yoruba god Ogun is recalled as “**Papa Ogoun**” (66). The presence of Africa in the novel reaches its highest point when Guinea is called by Haitians as “**Guinée natale**” (66) [native Guinea], the land they were uprooted from by slave raiders.

Gouverneurs de la rosée also allocates a special place to the issue of sustainable development. The struggle to sustain life in a hostile environment is central in the novel. The protagonist’s efforts evolve around that single aim and a study of the novel would be incomplete without addressing the theme of sustainable development.

The Struggle for Sustainable Development in *Gouverneurs de la rosée*

One thing that strikes the reader is that a concept which has now become the theme of almost all international forums, “Sustainable Development,” is treated carefully and with

diligence in *Gouverneurs de la rosée*, a novel published around the of middle of the 19th century. In this chapter Sustainable Development is the struggle to ensure the existence of the human race on earth, focusing on the good management of the natural resources that make human beings' existence possible. Viewed from that angle, Sustainable Development is a concept whose proponents like Anne E. Egelston (2013), David Osterfeld (1992) and many others are drawing the attention of the world to the fact that the destruction of the environment by human beings has reached such a high level that human existence is threatened. They point out that global warming is on the rise, natural resources are being wiped away, the ozone layer is becoming thinner and thinner and as a result, human existence is in jeopardy. Jacques Roumain's novel raised the same problem almost hundred years ago, with the portrayal of the decimation of the environment in Haiti, with a comparison between the green rich vegetation and abundance in Haiti some years before and the dry, sterile, poor Haiti some years later where hunger and lack of rain kills people. The following excerpt from the novel illustrates the damage that the new generation have inflicted on their environment. The narrator depicts how rich the land was and how conducive the environment was to the survival of human beings: "Pour sûr qu'ils avaient eu tort de déboiser. Du vivant du défunt Josaphat Jean - Joseph, le père de Bien-aimé, les arbres poussaient drus là-haut. Ils avaient incendié le bois pour faire des jardins de vivres: planté les pois congo sur le plateau, le maïs à flanc de coteau". (p.13). [Of course they were wrong by cutting down all the trees without planting any, to replace them. When the late Josaphat Jean-Joseph, Bien-aime's father was still alive, thick plantations grew up over there. But they had now all been burnt down by people who wanted to grow crops and make gardens. They wanted to plant peanuts on plateaux, and corn on the sides of the hills]. This shows the regret the inhabitants of the area feel and the nostalgia they feel for the good moments before they had destroyed their environment. This is

therefore a location of the notion of Sustainable Development at the centre of the debate; Roumain was undoubtedly ahead of his time.

Several definitions and explanations are attributed to Sustainable Development today. Sustainable Development basically means working toward ensuring decent living conditions for the current generation of human beings without jeopardizing the living conditions of future generations. *Gouverneurs de la rosée* is a pan-Africanist and radical political work and also a blatant exposition of the consequences of the denial or violation of sustainable development. Kendie and Martens (2008) define and explain the concept of sustainable development in the following terms:

The idea of sustainable development or sustainability represents an attempt to link environment and development. This was effectively done through the report *Our Common Future* by the World Commission on Environment and Development or WCED (the Brundtland Report), which states that the critical global environmental problems were both the result of the enormous poverty of the South and the non-sustainable patterns of consumption and production in the North. It calls for a strategy that unites development and the environment-described by the now-common term sustainable development, defined as “development that meets the needs of the current generations without compromising the ability of the future generation to meet their own needs (Kendie and Martens 2008: 6).

Our Common Future clarifies the notion of Sustainable development by posing that Sustainable Development therefore is based on two key concepts: the concept of ‘needs’, in particular the essential needs of the world’s poor, to which overriding priority should be given, and the other concept is the idea of limitations imposed by the state of technology and

social organization on the environment's ability to meet present and future needs. The same document urges the reader to see the world as a system that is connected to 'space' and a system that is connected to 'time'. The world as a system over space means that air pollution in North America affects air quality in Asia and pesticides sprayed in Argentina can affect fish stock off the coast of Australia. The idea of system over time refers to issues like the following: decisions made by our grandparents on how to farm the land affect our agricultural practices today. *Our Common Future* also stresses the fact that political decisions taken today will certainly impact the quality of life the young generation will lead (urban poverty, etc.). The concept of Sustainable Development can therefore be seen as a way of thinking which helps us see the interconnection between the environment, human action, the quality of life we lead (poverty or riches), political decisions, health issues, etc. It helps us understand ourselves and the world and makes us aware of the fact that the problems that we face as a society are serious and can be solved by us, if we use other means, not the ones we used when we were-may be subconsciously or out of ignorance- creating them.

Another work that pondered the notion of sustainable development, with the aim of shedding more light on the meaning of that widely used notion today is that of Bill Hopwood *et al.* (2005), titled "Sustainable Development: Mapping Different Approaches" an article which clearly shows that Sustainable Development certainly has the potential to solve fundamental challenges for humanity now and in the future. The authors however caution the reader that the notion needs clarity of meaning. They begin by posing that sustainable development is broadly speaking, an attempt to combine growing concerns about a wide range of environmental and also socio-economic issues. In order to clarify the understanding of the concept of sustainable development, they present a classification and mapping of different trends of thought on sustainable development, their political and policy

frameworks and their attitude towards change and also their means of change. They stress that sustainable development has to be understood as a notion which concentrates more on the sustainable livelihood and well-being, rather than well-having which is an attitude created and encouraged by the capitalist world view. They advocate a long term environmental sustainability which in itself requires a strong basis in principles which link the social and the environmental to human equity. Munyaradzi Mawere (2014) on his side adds another vital dimension to the concept of sustainable development. He first points out the holistic and organic life style which was prevailing in pre-colonial Africa in his work *Culture, Indigenous Knowledge and Development in Africa* and points out the harmony that existed between Africans and their environment at that time. He states how pre-colonial Africa was endowed with a tremendous body of technological and indigenous knowledge which were woven into the fabric of the African societies themselves. The author shows how this rich body of knowledge was used to solve socio-economic, political, health and environmental problems and how they were able to answer the needs of the African populations. The book then elaborates the colonial penetration in Africa and the changes it came with, especially the displacement of the traditional or indigenous African knowledge and the consequence of such relegation. The most striking point the author makes is how a nexus can be found between African indigenous knowledge, culture and development. His work calls for a revival and reinstitution of African indigenous knowledge without disregarding Western values and how such a combination can be a strategy that leads to the promotion and achievement of sustainable development in Africa and also in other parts of the world. Awuah-Nyamekye (2014) does an ethnographic study of the role of religious beliefs in environmental decline and also environmental conservation in Ghana, focusing on traditional religious and cultural beliefs of the Berekum Traditional Area in Ghana. He provides evidence that the indigenous tradition

of the people in the area where he conducted his study had a considerable number of cultural elements that aim at environmental conservation. Douglas Nagashima and Marie Roué raise a similar concern in their article “Indigenous Knowledge, Peoples and Sustainable Practice” (2002). They make a case which is very similar to the one made by Munyaradzi Mawere (2014). They state that indigenous knowledge is becoming an important part of the main stream sustainable development and biodiversity conservation discourse and they attribute that to article 8 (j) of the Convention on Biological Diversity (Rio 1992) which required signatories of the convention to “respect, preserve and maintain knowledge, innovations and practices of indigenous and local communities embodying traditional life- styles relevant to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity”. With this emphasis on the consideration of indigenous knowledge, many scholars (scientists and policy makers) are therefore calling for an integration of indigenous and science-based knowledge. The authors then touch upon the controversy which this approach raises: partisans of the indigenous knowledge integration in sustainable development issues will be satisfied while scientists might find the foundation of their craft and trade jeopardized. The researchers point out that scientists might simply add a veneer of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) to their work and proceed with their regular Western-science based practices as usual. That attitude of scientists can be explained by the fact they still perceive indigenous knowledge as a resource that must be appropriated, exploited and tested first. Then, a validation process which is based on the Western scientific principles, rules and laws will separate the objective from the subjective, the useful from the useless and indigenous science from indigenous belief and at the end of this process, knowledge corresponding to the paradigm of Western science will be extracted and accepted and the “rest” which is indigenous knowledge will be rejected. This “cognitive mining

system” will certainly benefit Westerners and their science and indigenous knowledge which is at the core of societies in Africa, Asia and other parts of the world is in danger of being dismembered, dispossessed and discarded from the sustainable development discourse.

Closely related to the issue of the destruction of human resources and the impact of such a phenomenon on human life is another fundamental notion which is exemplified in *Gouverneurs de la rosée* and which is also closely related to Sustainable Development: The Commons, and the Tragedy of the Commons. The Tragedy of the Commons is a theory propounded by Garret Hardin (1968), according to which individuals, acting rationally and individually according to each other’s self-interest behave contrary to the whole group’s best interest by depleting some common resources and in this context, “Commons” means the atmosphere, oceans, rivers, fish stocks, national parks and any other shared resource. In the novel under study, Haitians are victims of the tragedy of the commons. The novel unravels the pitiful state into which the land has been rendered, as a result of human activity: “les érosions ont mis à nu de longues coulées de roches: ils ont saigné la terre jusqu’à l’os” (*Gouverneurs*: p.13). [Erosion had exposed long lines of rocks: the land had been made to bleed to the bone. The obvious consequence of such a phenomenon is abject poverty in the country. There is joblessness, draught, hunger, need and want: “un peu de bois à couper pour réparer les entourages des jardins, quelques bayahondes à abattre pour le charbon que leurs femmes iront colporter à dos de bourrique jusqu’à la ville. C’est avec quoi ils devraient prolonger leur existence affamée”(40). [Just a little bit of wood to cut and fence gardens, few trees to fell for charcoal that women will use donkeys to carry to the city, to sell]. This can be contrasted to what Haiti was before, a green land where people did not know famine, a land of abundance as the following lines demonstrate, with a pan-African reference to the green grass of Guinea: “On entrant dans **l’herbe de Guinée!** (Les pieds nus

dans la rosée, le ciel pâli, la fraîcheur, la carillon des pintades sauvages au loin...). Peu à peu les arbres noircis, leurs feuillages encore chargés de lambeaux d'ombre, reprenaient leur couleur. Une huile de lumière les baigait. Un madras de nuage souffres ceignait le sommet des mornes élevés. Le pays émergait du sommeil" (p.14). [Then one entered the Grass of Guinea! (barefooted in the morning dew, the grey sky, the freshness produced by the sound of guinea fowls...). Gradually, trees would become dark and their leaves would produce shade. Light was everywhere, clouds covered the tops of hills. The land was awake].

I would like to point out that I am aware of the numerous critics made against Hardin's notion of "Tragedy of the Commons". The most common criticism against him is that he fails to distinguish between common property and free access property. Those critics argue that what Hardin calls "open-to all pasture land" as a common property is actually an open-access property. The same critics add therefore that a better understanding of "The Tragedy of the Commons" scenario requires knowledge about the nature and the legal rights attached to different kinds of property regimes. Ian Angus (2008) states that "The Tragedy of the Commons" has for more than 40 years been considered as a sacred text, which is openly referred to as the "dominant paradigm within which social scientists assess natural resources" (quoting Bromley and Cernea 1989, p.6). Angus adds that since its publication in *Science* in 1968, "The Tragedy of the Commons" has been anthologized in at least 111 books, making it one of the most reprinted articles ever to appear in any scientific journal". He however adds that like most "sacred texts," The Tragedy of the Commons is more often cited than read and extrapolates that although its title sounds authoritative and scientific, it simply falls far short of science because Hardin provides no evidence to support his claim which is that the "tragedy" is inevitable. He adds that Hardin did not know enough about the "Commons" which were part of European (especially English)

tradition while Hardin was American and as such, he did not know what really happened in the commons: “self-regulation by the communities was involved,” and the use of arable and meadowlands was under the supervision and direction of the community and he cites Friedrich Engels’s account of the “mark,” the form taken by commons-based communities in parts of pre-capitalist Germany to substantiate his point.

One thing which is obvious in the study of *Gouverneurs de la rosée*, despite all these various and useful debates around the issue of the “Commons” and “The Tragedy of the Commons” is that the main protagonist in the book places environmental issues at the centre of all his actions. One can confidently say that Manuel devotes his life to the reversal of situations in the country. Until he is killed by local enemies who opposed his revolutionary and developmental activities after his return from Cuba, Manuel works tirelessly to ensure sustainable development in Haiti. He works hard to discover a water body which will irrigate the whole island and teaches people how to work toward the development of the island, without imperialist interference. He discovers a water body and talks to his lover about it and the advantages it will bring to Haiti. Manuel asks her to assist him mobilize both men and women for the development of the land (he stresses the important role that women play in such a development process) once water begins to flow and at the same time, he reminds her that if the whole community does not unite to put an end to unnecessary fights, the water body will remain a reserve, not a resource which can be used for better living conditions:

Quand j’aurai deterré l’eau, je te ferai savoir et tu commenceras à parler aux femmes. Les femmes, c’est irritable, je ne dis pas non, mais c’est plus sensé aussi et porté du côté du coeur et il y a des fois, tu sais, le coeur et la raison c’est du pareil au même. Tu diras: Cousine Une Telle, tu as appris la nouvelle? Quelle nouvelle? Elle répondra. On répète comme ça que le garçon de Bienaimé,

ce nègre qui s'appelle Manuel a découvert une source... et comme on est fâchés, la source restera là, sans profit pour personne (Roumain 1946: 87)/[When I dig the water I will tell you and you will speak to the women. Of course women can be troublesome sometimes, but they have more sense and listen more to their heart. You will say: my cousin, have you heard the news? Which news? The answer will be: it is being speculated that Manuel, the son of Bienaimé has discovered a source of water... and since we are not united, that water will remain there, nobody will benefit from it].

Conclusion

This chapter attempted a close reading of Jacques Roumain's *Gouverneurs de la rosée*, highlighting the following features: pan-Africanism, Marxism and sustainable development. The chapter also pointed out that the image of Africa is an omnipresent and positive one in the novel and that *Gouverneurs de la rosée* made a clarion call for sustainable development long before it became the concern of most individuals and organizations. The three different theoretical approaches used analysing the novel (Pan-Africanism, Marxism and Sustainable Development) were important in that they help us demonstrate how the novel relates to both the period in which it was written and the present. This has therefore made us see that the novel has a truly timeless quality to it in terms of its thematic preoccupations.

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Chapter 4

Indigenous-Based Adaptation: An Imperative for Sustainable Climate Change Strategies for Africa

Nelson Chanza

Introduction

Discourses characterising sustainable development have largely resolved within the realm of human-environmental connections. Change and variability in the climate system, attributable to atmospheric destabilisation largely by human activities is a threat to sustainability. The effects of this disturbance, noticeable in extreme weather and climatic events such as violent storms, floods and drought pose serious risks particularly to poor communities. The paradox of these phenomena in Africa is that the very communities vulnerable to climatic events have minimum contribution to the anthropogenic greenhouse gases (GHGs) largely blamed for destabilising the global climate system. Of particular mention is the fact that indigenous people are trapped as innocent victims of climate change since their contribution to the anthropogenic forcing behind global climate change is very insignificant. To them, their religious attention to environmental management principles shaped by their indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) is what has perpetuated their livelihoods. The fear, however, is that indigenous people's resilience and adaptive capacities to these environmental perturbations are increasingly being compromised. This situation is exacerbated by importation of extraneous development interventions – a technocratically-driven model for development that ignores the very fundamental aspects of social and ecological sustainability shaping indigenous African communities.

The surge in attention to local-based knowledge in addressing global development challenges can be attributed mainly to growing environmental problems and from acknowledging that the conventional approach has practical limitations at local levels where projects are implemented. With regards to climate change, which is generally understood as the long-term change or variability of the climate system, many scientists are becoming less arrogant about the science behind this phenomenon (Boko *et al.*, 2007; Nyong *et al.*, 2007; Berkes, 2009; Cornell *et al.*, 2013). This means the climate change knowledge community is now increasingly populated by researchers and practitioners who acknowledge the value of indigenous climate knowledge (ICK) in climate science. When viewed through the lens of sustainable development, opportunities abound in the revitalisation of IKS in the development agenda. For instance, the tenets of sustainable development, which are about inclusion, devolution, participation and local level decision making through incorporating the local people targeted by development interventions can be operationalised. In addition, this is a sufficient call for reconsidering the significance of an African epistemology, which according to Semali and Kincheloe (1999) and Odora-Hoppers (2002) the holders of indigenous knowledge (IK) have largely been transmogrified and subjugated. In the context of climate change, the challenge is that the phenomenon is not adequately understood owing to the complexities associated with the climate system (IPCC, 2013) and the limited robust policy (Den Elzen *et al.*, 2005; Tompkins & Adger, 2005; Bizikova, 2012; IPCC 2014a) and research attention (AAS, 2013) to it, particularly in Africa.

Despite the improvement in scientific models to study current climate system and predict the future climate, overreliance on Western-based knowledge in Africa is not only feared to give a coarse-grained understanding of the phenomenon at local levels, but could also lead to piecemeal strategies in climate interventions. Scholars like Boko *et al.*

(2007) and Turner and Clifton (2009) suggest that IK can improve understanding of climate change, its effects and ways to adapt to and mitigate its impacts. With this view in mind, there is need to closely examine how indigenous-based knowledge can contribute towards enhancing climate interventions and building community resilience against climatic vagaries in Africa.

Mitigation and adaptation are the main strategies driving climate policy and practice. By definition, mitigation involves devising measures both to reduce sources and to enhance sinks of GHGs, while adaptation involves responding to impacts induced by climate change. The climate change community prefers to treat these concepts jointly (see Nyong *et al.*, 2007; Wilbanks & Sathaye, 2007; Wilbanks *et al.*, 2007; IPCC, 2012; IPCC, 2014a; IPCC, 2014b). While acknowledging the complementary roles of these concepts, the focus of this chapter is on adaptation. Four reasons have informed this choice: Firstly, in order to adequately deepen the understanding of IK applications in climate response, it is logical to concentrate the discussion on adaptation as a single strategy. Secondly, although both mitigation and adaptation options are necessary, they are distinctive based on benefits that are global and long-term for mitigation, and local and shorter term for adaptation. This means adaptation can be a more preferred option for indigenous communities grappling with the devastating effects of climate change. Thirdly, the global GHG share of most African countries is very insignificant (just about 3% of total global emissions) (Den Elzen *et al.*, 2005; IPCC, 2013; Nyong *et al.*, 2007). Fourthly, it is an undisputable fact that even if the world was to curtail the rise in global temperatures through robust mitigation policies that cut GHG emissions, poor communities mostly in Africa are already facing more extreme and frequent droughts, floods, and other climate incidences. These events could only be fully addressed through appropriate adaptation interventions.

Inarguably, the continent's orientation should mainly focus on building and strengthening capacity and allocating resources for responding to climatic stimuli. The objective therefore should be towards achieving resilience and climate-proof African communities through harnessing their own IK, skills, expertise, experimentations and ingenuity. This philosophy is considered in this chapter as the hallmark of sustainable African communities in the context of a changing and variable climate system. In this chapter, I argue that looking at Western-based science as a panacea to addressing climatic problems in Africa is a false premise, which needs to be critiqued against its noticeable limitations in building climate resilient communities. Essentially, the thesis driving this discussion is that long-time indigenous communities relying on ecosystem-based and climate-sensitive livelihoods are highly attentive to environmental change and variability. As such, they are not passive observers of the climate system. Their knowledge, survival strategies, experimentations, technologies and practices can be drawn for successful climate adaptation. It draws from a potpourri of evidence on resilient communities in Africa, which have managed to withstand the increasingly climatic risks for several years they have been witnessing the phenomena.

Framing climate change and ICK: Concepts, epistemology and methodology

This section conceptualises climate change as a global conundrum stymieing efforts toward sustainable development. The effects however, are largely felt in poor nations characterising most African countries. As such, it is necessary to examine the vulnerabilities of Africa to the risks and hazards brought about by climate change. This analysis is also important to contextualise the development, practice and applications of IK. Within this attention, it is also vital to

clarify the epistemic and methodological stance for understanding IK deployment in climate adaptation.

Conceptualising climate change and IK

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) defines climate change as: *A change in the state of the climate that can be identified (e.g., by using statistical tests) by changes in the mean and/or the variability of its properties, and that persists for an extended period, typically decades or longer. Climate change may be due to natural internal processes or external forcings, or to persistent anthropogenic changes in the composition of the atmosphere or in land use* (IPCC, 2014b: 120). The IPCC is a global scientific body established by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) to provide authoritative international communication on the scientific understanding of climate change. It also specifies the need to first understand the term climate in order to fully comprehend the concept of climate change (see Box 1).

Box 1: Definition of Climate

Climate in a narrow sense is usually defined as the average weather, or more rigorously, as the statistical description in terms of the mean and variability of relevant quantities over a period of time ranging from months to thousands or millions of years. The classical period for averaging these variables is 30 years, as defined by the World Meteorological Organization. The relevant quantities are most often surface variables such as temperature, precipitation and wind. Climate in a wider sense is the state, including a statistical description, of the climate system.

(Source: IPCC, 2007a: 942)

Indigenous knowledge on the other hand, has been variously defined and the terminology of it is also heterogeneous. To Nakashima *et al* (2012), the term refers to

the process and application of knowledge over generations with generational modifications to guide human societies in their innumerable interactions with their surrounding environment. Orlove *et al* (2010) see it as referring to the place-based knowledge that is rooted in local cultures and mostly associated with long-settled communities that have strong ties to their natural environments. Earlier, Warren (1991) had simplified the definition into wisdom of people for survival in their own environment. These definitions specify that the knowledge that local people have is developed from studying their environment. Clearly, it can be seen here that indigenous people are closely bonded to their environment, which as they exploit its resources they also keenly observe and study it to ensure that their survival is maintained. This knowledge and its applications is the hallmark of sustainable environmental management, which is necessary to build resilient communities against the environmental disturbances such as climate change.

The terminology toolbox of this knowledge form held by indigenous people is very diverse. The commonly deployed terms are IK (Grenier, 1998; World Bank, 2004; Nyong *et al.*, 2007; Sekine *et al.*, 2009; Green *et al.*, 2010; Green & Raygorodetsky, 2010; Lwoga *et al.*, 2010; Roos *et al.*, 2010) and IKS (du Toit, 2005; Le Grange, 2009; Mapara, 2009; Mawere, 2010). Other terms in use include: local knowledge (Briggs, 2005; Peloquin & Berkes, 2009); traditional ecological knowledge (Berkes *et al.*, 2000; Lefale, 2009); traditional knowledge (Berkes, 2009; Nakashima *et al.*, 2012); traditional phonological knowledge (Turner and Clifton, 2009); indigenous climate knowledge (Olove *et al.*, 2010); local ecological knowledge (Brook & McLachlan, 2008); and endogenous knowledge (Hountondji, 1997). While the commonly used terms such as IK and IKS feature throughout this chapter, the term indigenous climate knowledge (ICK) shall extensively be deployed because of its closeness to the topic of climate change adaptation pursued. It is important to note that the numerous terms used actually means the same,

that is, legitimate knowledge necessary for people to sustainably manage their environment in order to earn a living now and in the future. Brook and McLachlan (2008: 3502) opine that such heterogeneity is obvious “given the complexities of these knowledge systems, the diversity of environments and cultures that they reflect, and the myriad ways that they are viewed, documented, and used.” IPCC argues that the problem in defining this knowledge system lies with disputes in internationally recognised definition of the indigenous people themselves as cited in Box 2.

Box 2: Definition of indigenous people

No internationally accepted definition of indigenous peoples exists. Common characteristics often applied under international law, and by United Nations agencies to distinguish indigenous peoples include: residence within or attachment to geographically distinct traditional habitats, ancestral territories, and their natural resources; maintenance of cultural and social identities, and social, economic, cultural and political institutions separate from mainstream or dominant societies and cultures; descent from population groups present in a given area, most frequently before modern states or territories were created and current borders defined; and self-identification as being part of a distinct indigenous cultural group, and the desire to preserve that cultural identity.

(Source: IPCC 2007b: 876)

By inferring from the IPCC definition of climate change stated above, some important messages can be read about its relationship with ICK. One, through their actions or inactions, human beings, including indigenous people can act as agents of the forcing behind climate change. For example, it is also widely acknowledged that some of the climate change impacts are actually a result of anthropogenic environmental disturbances and climate change merely compounds them (Berkes, 2009; Sönke *et al.*, 2010; Cornell *et al.*, 2013; IPCC,

2014a). Important to note however, is that through their strong and direct ties to the environment, indigenous people are capable of prudently managing the same. Two, because of their direct environment-dependent livelihoods, local people are capable of observing and dealing with the changes that occur in their environment over time. This capability is strengthened by their religious observation and monitoring of changes that occur in the climate system, together with their long term experiences with climatic phenomena. Against this view, indigenous-based knowledge is capable of filling knowledge gaps and validating current understanding about climate change particularly at local levels. Third, the generic definition used by the IPCC has a quantitative bias. It states that the change can be identified by using statistical tests to establish the mean deviations over a specified period such as a 30-years period. From an ICK perspective, Chanza (2014) argues that it is difficult to describe the change and variability in statistical terms. He charges that the quantitative bias in the definition given by IPCC may restrain participation of indigenous people in the climate change regimes. Instead, a more inclusive approach needs to recognise that change and variability are; not only statistical, but can also be expressed qualitatively as long as those changes have a record spanning the climate reference periods considered by the IPCC. Within this qualitative narrative therefore, indigenous people can use their knowledge and experiences not only to devise adaptation strategies but also to interpret climate change.

Nakashima *et al* (2012) are of the opinion that the climate observations by indigenous communities generate knowledge that contributes to climate science by offering detailed interpretations and explanations at a much finer spatial scale, with considerable temporal depth beyond the consideration of climate scientists. In a similar thought, Chanza (2014: 90) proposes a climate-oriented definition of ICK as: *The reservoir of knowledge, skills, technologies and practices of a local indigenous community (a Science Academy) of elders (the scientists), about long-term*

noticeable change and variability in the climate system of their environment. The community is capable of sharing and utilising this knowledge to meet their livelihoods and survival needs. The latter is crucial in framing adaptation practices and has been treated in adaptation literature and practice as community-based adaptation (CBA).

Africa: Crying voices in the context of global climate change

Recent evidence collated by IPCC confirms that the major driver of global climate change is anthropogenic global warming from GHG emissions largely from industrialised countries (IPCC, 2014b). Indeed, climate change in Africa is a paradox because the continent has the smallest contribution to the problematique. As can be read in Box 3, Africa is seriously affected by climate change. Evidence of climate change is noticeable in its broad impacts ranging from decreased agricultural production and food insecurity; water stress and water quality problems; ecosystem damages; inundation of low-lying land; human health problems; and changes in sea levels (Boko *et al.*, 2007; Parry *et al.*, 2007; IFRCRCS, 2014; IPCC, 2014a; Mawere 2011).

Box 3: Projected regional effects of climate change in Africa

The following facts have been noted about the effects of climate change in Africa:

- The impacts of climate change are likely to be greatest where they co-occur with a range of other stresses (e.g., unequal access to resources; enhanced food insecurity; poor health management systems. These stresses, enhanced by climate variability and change, further enhance the vulnerabilities of many people.
- An increase of 5 to 8% (60 to 90million ha) of arid and semi-arid land is projected by the 2080s under a range of climate change scenarios.
- Declining agricultural yields are likely due to drought and land

degradation, especially in marginal areas. Changes in the length of growing period have been noted under various scenarios. Areas of major change include the coastal systems of southern and eastern Africa. Under most scenarios, mixed rain-fed, semi-arid systems are shown to be heavily affected by changes in climate in the Sahel. Mixed rain-fed and highland perennial systems in the Great Lakes region in East Africa and in other parts of East Africa are also heavily affected.

- Current stress on water in many areas of Africa is likely to be enhanced by climate variability and change. Increases in runoff in East Africa (possibly floods) and decreases in runoff and likely increased drought risk in other areas (e.g., southern Africa) are projected by the 2050s.

- Any changes in the primary production of large lakes are likely to have important impacts on local food supplies. For example, Lake Tanganyika currently provides 25 to 40% of animal protein intake for the population of the surrounding countries, and climate change is likely to reduce primary production and possible fish yields by roughly 30%. The interaction of human management decisions, including over-fishing, is likely to further compound fish off takes from lakes.

- Ecosystems are likely to experience major shifts and changes in species range and possible extinctions (e.g., fynbos and succulent Karoo biomes in southern Africa).

- Mangroves and coral reefs are projected to be further degraded, with additional consequences for fisheries and tourism.

- Towards the end of the 21st century, projected sea-level rise will affect low-lying coastal areas with large populations. The cost of adaptation will exceed 5 to 10% of GDP.

(Source: Parry *et al.*, 2007: 59)

In Africa, multiple stresses pose serious vulnerability to climate change. Africa's propensity to anticipated climate change is mainly a function of a vicious combination of such factors as endemic poverty; poor governance; weak and limited institutional capacities; limited capital, technology and ingenuity; environmental degradation; natural disasters; and political conflicts (Boko *et al.*, 2007; Chirisa & Chanza, 2009;

2011; IPCC, 2012). The predisposition to climatic events is also happening amidst a serious reluctance and shortfall in commitment to avail adaptation financing to support adaptation needs of developing countries as reported by Ayers (2009). It should be emphasised here that when such impasse arise at global level, poor and vulnerable indigenous communities will be worst affected owing to other entrenched non-climatic stressors such as HIV/AIDS, poor development policies, political instability, corruption, poor education, and limited employment and livelihoods opportunities (Sperling, 2003; Thornton *et al.*, 2006; Chanza 2011; IPCC, 2014a). Against this background, it is necessary to analyse the survival strategies that indigenous communities have in an increasingly changing and variable climate system.

ICK and community-based climate change adaptation

Adaptation literature is increasingly populated by ICK applications as a strategy to guide effective and successful climate interventions. Generically, adaptation is seen as one of the policy options for reducing the negative impact of climate change (Berkes and Jolly, 2001; Sovacool, 2011). IPCC (2007b: 869) refers to it as “adjustment in natural or human systems in response to actual or expected climatic stimuli or their effects, which moderates harm or exploits beneficial opportunities.” IPCC further distinguishes adaptation into three typologies shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Description of adaptation typologies

Adaptation Typology	Description
Anticipatory (proactive) adaptation	Adaptation that takes place before impacts of climate change are observed.
Autonomous (spontaneous) adaptation	Adaptation that does not constitute a conscious response to climatic stimuli but is triggered by ecological changes in natural systems and by market or welfare changes in human systems.
Planned adaptation	Adaptation that is the result of a deliberate policy decision, based on an awareness that conditions have changed or are about to change and that action is required.

(Source: IPCC, 2007b)

It can be observed here that the three adaptation typologies are all applicable to ICK. Chanza (2014) observes that indigenous-based adaptation is a continuum from short-term coping practices (autonomous adaptation), medium-term adaptive strategies (planned adaptation) to fairly long-term strategies (proactive adaptation). With regard to ICK deployment in climate adaptation, Chanza (ibid) advances three key points pertinent to its validity. Firstly, the knowledge is understood collectively to include community skills, technologies and practices that give them a dual collective understanding; about how to observe and record the phenomenon; and how to review adaptation practices and appropriately respond to climate change. This means in its architecture and praxis, CBA uses ICK. As a concept, CBA is viewed as a community-centric approach that identifies local people experiencing climatic events as the main stakeholders in the implementation of coping and adaptive interventions

(Ensor, 2009; Sekine *et al.*, 2009; Kirkland, 2012). The *raison d'être* is to build adaptive capacity and enhance community resilience against climatic disturbances. Kirkland (2012) emphasises that CBA projects are more effective if they actively solicit the input and participation of local people. This concept has been advocated by Zvigadza and Mharadze (2010) as a crucial approach in dealing with climate change threats to the vulnerable populations. Similarly, Mawere *et al* (2013a) also emphasise the same point in Zimbabwe.

Secondly, the concept deployed here is holistic, empowering and participatory. Related to CBA, is the concept of climate governance – a new discourse about fairness, burden-sharing, inclusivity and participatory democracy in climate regimes (Chirisa and Chanza, 2009; Ensor, 2009; Backstrand and Loubrand, 2012). Ensor (2009) approaches it as governance for community-based adaptation. The concept of climate governance embraces inclusivity in designing mitigation and adaptation strategies by all climate stakeholders, including indigenous communities affected by climate change. Specifically, adaptation governance dwells on participation, equality and justice in decision making about interventions to contain climatic events. This means in both theory and practice, ICK is a necessary ingredient both for framing adaptation and for realising the success of adaptation interventions.

Thirdly, because they have been in close contact with their environment, it can be argued that these 'scientists' have unique knowledge and ingenuity unmatched with Western science since theirs is practically relevant to the specific community demands (Odora-Hoppers, 2002; Brook & McLachlan, 2008; Nakashima *et al.*, 2012). Clearly, ICK is based on praxis and pragmatism. Its application is valuable in addressing the specific demands of grassroots people experiencing climatic events.

The IPCC fully recognises ICK as a strategy in climate adaptation. This is evidenced by the inclusion in its fourth and

fifth assessment reports (AR4 and AR5, respectively) distinctive sections on indigenous knowledge (IPCC, 2007b; IPCC, 2014a). It acknowledges that the value of IKS extends beyond the local level realm to the attention of scientists and planners in strategies to address community development challenges. In a similar recognition, given the serious effects on development exerted by climate change, World Bank (1998; 2004) advises that local knowledge is potentially harnessable to advance sustainable development. In his book titled 'Culture, Indigenous Knowledge and Development in Africa: Reviving Interconnections for Sustainable Development', Mawere (2014a) advises the same. Other scholars have also argued that incorporation of IK in climate change can lead to development of interventions that are pragmatic, cost-effective, participatory and sustainable (for example, Berkes and Jolly, 2001; Nyong *et al.*, 2007; IUCN, 2008; King *et al.*, 2008; Berkes, 2009; Green and Raygorodetsky, 2010).

Epistemological and methodological stance for ICK and adaptation

The topic of climate change and the challenges posed by the phenomenon cannot be adequately understood by adopting natural science methodological purity. Instead, there is need to break the epistemological and methodological boundaries that have dominated climate changes studies over the years. This proposal recognises indigenous epistemologies and worldviews. Because indigenous people have been witnessing environmental changes brought about by climate change, they have developed specific paradigms that have shaped their response strategies. These paradigmatic stances need to be adequately recognised in adaptation policy and practice. Chanza (2014) views this orientation as emancipatory epistemic pedagogy meant to empower previously transmogrified voices and knowabilities. Odora-Hoppers (2002), and earlier, Semali and Kincheloe (1999) share a similar view that Eurocentric-

based methodologies are not appropriate for understanding deep-rooted African practices. The challenge therefore, is to come up with a robust approach that recognises the incorporation of indigenous people with their ICK in adaptation research. In their article titled ‘Epistemological and Methodological Framework for Indigenous Knowledge in Climate Science’, Chanza and de Wit (2013) outline a framework of study intended to harness the valuable insights of the local ‘scientists’, whose knowledge has previously been subjected to epistemological injustices.

For ICK to be recognised therefore, it should be framed within appropriate epistemology and methodology. According to Grenier (1998: 39) “many of the challenges of IK research relate directly or indirectly to the difficulty of studying a subordinate knowledge system (that is, IK) using the dominant knowledge system (that is, Western science).” The orientation pursued in this thinking is that of a qualitative social science enquiry with a firm foundation for participatory interaction with the IK generators (referred to by Odora-Hoppers as scientists in their own right) throughout the research process. Alvesson (2011) posits that in social science enquiry an approach towards empirical research is established through acquiring knowledge from the people observing phenomena. In the context of climate change phenomena, researcher interactions with subjects through undertaking interviews and observations can reveal the reality of people’s experiences and give a rich pool of participants’ views about climate adaptation strategies. As advised by Chanza and de Wit (2013), a hasty and ad hoc approach in ICK inquiry mostly associated with questionnaire-based quantitative research paradigms is not an ideal method for understanding this knowledge form and its valuable diverse applications. They warn that such approaches could be viewed with scepticism or as unscientific; and therefore, easily dismissed; the knowledge may remain largely partially understood, and fail to give any practical directions to adaptation policy implementation; and generators of the

knowledge could remain buried in underground trenches of knowledge injustices. The unfortunate result of this is that the ICK is most likely to naturally disappear as the holders of it vanish.

Indigenous-based climate change adaptation: Evidence from cases

In order not to appear to be romanticising ICK, it is necessary to show empirical evidence of its application in climate change adaptation. There are several cases of its deployment across the global landscape. Although other cases showing the role of IK in human development are cited here, concentration will be done on typical examples from Africa. This section begins by a scholarly list of known areas of ICK applications. These fields are relevant to the topic of climate change adaptation addressed in this chapter. Detailed treatment of ICK deployment in climate adaptation will be given later after the general analysis.

Broad IK applications

Most of the scholarly deployment of IK is not specific to climate adaptation, but is implied in the demonstrated range of its application in such fields as agriculture (Warren, 1991; Patt & Gwata, 2002; Deressa *et al.*, 2009; Lwoga *et al.*, 2010; Mubaya, 2010; Nakapipi *et al.*, 2011; Molefe *et al.*, 2012; Mawere 2014a), disaster management (Gwimbi 2009; Roos *et al.*, 2010; Speranza *et al.*, 2010; Carcellar *et al.*, 2011; Satterthwaite, 2011), rural development (Mawere 2010; Marariki, 2011), development planning and practice (Gorjestani, 2000; World Bank, 2004; Briggs, 2005) and hydrological applications (Laborde *et al.*, 2012; Thornto and Macjejewski Scheer, 2012). Other reported applications are in understanding the impacts of climate change (Durden, 2004; Green and Raygorodetsky, 2010; Chanza, 2014; Chanza and de

Wit, 2015), meteorology and climate science (Ajibade & Shokemi, 2003; King *et al.*, 2008; Aguilar *et al.*, 2009; Gearheard *et al.*, 2009; Lefale, 2009; Green *et al.*, 2010; Jlyane and Ngulube, 2012; Rusiro *et al.*, 2012), and ecology and environmental management applications (Berkes *et al.*, 2000; Du Toit, 2005; Muhando, 2005; Brook & McLachlan, 2008; Peloquin and Berkes, 2009; Mala *et al.*, 2010; Constantino *et al.*, 2012; Nganso *et al.*, 2012; Mawere, 2012; 2013a; 2014b).

Important to understand in this analysis is the fact that the broad range of IK applications is useful for advancing climate change adaptation objectives. They embrace the adaptation agenda by giving communities numerous livelihoods options necessary for building their coping and adaptive capacities. For instance, by understanding changes in the local weather and climate patterns, farmers are capable of adopting appropriate agronomic practices in terms of timing of planting, weeding and harvesting; choice of crop varieties; and choice of animal breeds and livestock rearing practices. Sustainable forest conservation through their customary arrangements and restrictions (Mohammed-Katerere, 2002) is an important mitigation measure capable of enhancing carbon sequestration in properly managed ecosystems, thus both mitigating against GHG emissions and allowing ecosystems to continuously provide services necessary for community adaptation and resilience. In addition, traditional phenological knowledge (TPK) in understanding the behaviour of certain plant and animal species (Lantz and Turner, 2003), can act as an early warning in seasonal patterns, thereby strengthening a community's resilience against climate irregularities. According to Mawere (2010) and Mararike (2011), strengthening of social mores and building of social capital that exist under IKS offer opportunities in livelihoods options and diversification. Such systems are also useful in addressing social imbalances and in poverty alleviation. Essentially, this knowledge is important in defence and social security. Communities apply this knowledge to secure their crops, homes, livestock and other community

assets against disasters. Within the climate science community, the adoption of defensive strategies against climate change is called mitigation and adaptation. The next section deepens this analysis by presenting specific cases where this knowledge form has been shown to offer adaptation opportunities.

ICK and climate change adaptation

Scholarship treating ICK and climate change adaptation is still fairly new, but rapidly growing. A first attempt appears to be that by Berkes and Jolly (2001) who assessed adaptive capacity to climate change of the Inuvialuit of the Canadian Western Arctic Community. Phenomenal attention to the topic is seen several years later when Nyong *et al* (2007), Sekine *et al* (2009), Turner and Clifton (2009), Orlove *et al* (2010), Nakashima *et al* (2012), Leonard *et al* (2013) and many other scholars increasingly investigated the topic. This increased appetite is in synchrony with the increasing acknowledgement on the dangers posed by climate change as reported by IPCC (2014b). The climate research community has managed to advance ample evidence on the utility of ICK in various fronts related to curtailing climatic phenomena. Studies done in the Sahel, semi-arid and arid region of Africa covering Senegal, Gambia, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Chad, Sudan, and South Sudan, reveal that local people have developed and implemented a range of methods that have enabled them to cope with a changing and variable climate system. To the amazement of many, it is even argued that some of these strategies go beyond those documented in mainstream science (Ajibade & Shokemi, 2003; Nyong *et al.*, 2007). For the purposes of deepening the understanding, some of these ranges of applicabilities are given here.

ICK for coping with drought

In many parts of Africa, evidence exists that indigenous communities are not passive observers of the change in climatic conditions. As a way of reacting to the phenomenon

of drought, the populations here use their rich traditional knowledge both for predicting the occurrence of drought and for utilising various choices in their indigenous adaptation toolboxes. For example, in recognition of fluctuations in precipitation patterns associated with recurrent droughts, Nyantakyi-Frimpong (2013) documents complex adaptation strategies developed by small-scale farmers in Northern Ghana. These range from prediction of the rainfall season, intercropping strategies, moisture improvement techniques and traditional crop varieties. According to him, the locals' predictive capacity still matches with increasingly seasonal variability in the area. They are able to determine the start of the wet season, the knowledge which they use to start land preparation and field planting. This knowledge is seen in studying the flowering of certain tree species, migration patterns of birds and the position of the constellation Pleiades. In addition, the growth of certain grass species during the rainy season helps them to determine soil moisture content, which they use to assess suitability of various crops. Decisions for intercropping are based on soil moisture variations and rainfall characteristics. Cowpeas, sorghum, millet and groundnuts combinations are preferred during poor rainfall seasons, while maize, beans, groundnuts and millet are also variously intermixed in average rainfall seasons. With regard to moisture improvement techniques, the locals reportedly use 'ƶai' planting method (a technique involving filling dug holes with compost in order to retain moisture when rainfall comes and to attract decomposers that improve both soil nutrients and texture). In Zimbabwe, Chanza (2014) observes a similar technique locally known as '*timbangute/dhigaudye*'. In mainstream agronomic practices, this method commonly referred to as conservation agriculture is now widely being up-scaled as a drought adaptation strategy. Important to note here is that the genesis of this conservation farming is inarguably indigenous.

The use of traditional crop varieties of sorghum, millet, beans, cowpeas, groundnuts and other crops is a commonly

indigenous-based drought adaptation practice in most African countries. These varieties are known to be drought tolerant. Mubaya (2010) reports on this strategy in Zambia and Zimbabwe. Nyantakyi-Frimpong (2013) observes the practice in Ghana, while Nakapiipi *et al* (2011) and Meyiwa and Ngubentombi (2010) report about it in Namibia and South Africa, respectively. A similar observation is noted by Ogalleh *et al* (2012) in Kenya. In Zimbabwe, several scholars have documented this strategy (for example, Patt and Gwata, 2002; Mapara, 2009; Mubaya, 2010; Mararike, 2011; and Chanza, 2014). Mawere (2014a) also explored several case studies about these mechanisms adopted by indigenous African people in coping with drought. In most of these cited cases, the local poor farmers actually prefer the local varieties mainly because the hybrid ones are not affordable, require very expensive fertilisers, are more vulnerable to disease and pest attack, and do not taste well. In worst cases, the hybrid crop varieties are not available to them. In Zambia and Zimbabwe, for instance, Mubaya (2012) reports that local farmers' prediction of seasonal climate was consistent with that from the meteorological departments, a forecasting capability that the locals use to enhance adaptation farming choices.

Orlove *et al* (2009) examine the local knowledge that famers in southern Uganda hold in understanding inter-annual variability in the timing and seasonality of rainfall. They identified four major components of their knowledge system necessary in coping and adapting to drought: the established familiarity with the seasonal patterns of rainfall and temperature, a set of local traditional climate indicators, observation of meteorological events and information about the progress of seasons. In Zimbabwe, Chanza (2014) observes a continuum of indigenous adaptation practices and strategies. In a participatory analysis of these measures with the IK generators, he categorised them into short-term (livestock stocking schedules, livestock culling, barter trading, wild fruit exploitation), medium-term (mixed cropping, early planting,

riverine farming, TPK and seasonal migration) and long-term (choice of crop varieties, dry planting, livestock production, conservation farming and emigration). Similarly, Ogalleh *et al* (2012) observe that farmers from Umande and Muhonia in Laikipia District, Kenya adopt different responses to cope. Much of their response is reactive since it is induced by past or current events such as drought. Anticipatory strategies recorded were based on some assessment of conditions in the future such as rainfall occurrences (see Table 2).

Table 2: Coping and adaptation strategies to local perceptions of climate change and variability in Laikipia, Kenya

Perception of climate change/variability variable	Range of responses	
	Rapid (coping) and longer-term (adaptation)	
	Crops	Livestock
Decreasing rainfall, unpredictable rainfalls, breaks in rainy seasons early rains, late rains	• Use early maturing crop varieties • Early planting • Late planting • Planting whenever a spell of rains is determined • Continuous planting • Rain harvesting into manually dug water pans • Irrigation from water pans • Seed preservation using local innovative techniques (e.g.	• Crop residues used as livestock feeds • Grass growing for sale during droughts • Livestock watering from water pans

	wood ash and use of expired batteries) • Making shallow basins around every crop	
Increasing Temperatures	• Mulching to reduce loss of water from soils • Irrigation from water pans	• Shifting from crop production to livestock keeping
Increasing frequency of droughts	• Use early maturing crop varieties • Conservation agriculture • Planting in shallow trenches • Mulching • Relocating to river banks to access river water for irrigation • Cultivation of commercial horticultural crops (tomatoes, peas, cabbages)	
		• Migrating with livestock to forests • Sale of livestock • Buy feed for livestock

(Source: Ogalleh *et al.*, 2012: 3314-3315)

Clearly, instead of policy makers and agricultural practitioners remaining sceptical about these local preferences, the continuous reliance on indigenous crop varieties in Africa is enough evidence that communities adopting these strategies have demonstrated their usefulness for the many years they have been witnessing drought.

ICK for coping with floods

In many parts of African communities, floods bring mixed fortunes to them (Gwimbi 2009; Chanza 2014). In Zimbabwe, the main adaptive mechanisms to floods observed by Chanza (2014) include structural designs, temporary migration and dual season cropping. Villagers in many parts of Africa also apply TPK through studying the behaviour of migratory birds and the flowering pattern of certain tree species to predict the occurrence of floods. They use the information to enhance their traditional early warning systems which are also supported by early action. Some early action interventions include temporary migration from riverines, transferring cattle to safer grazing sites and sorting of some valuable household assets (Vaz 2000; Gwimbi, 2009; Chanza 2014). One of the local narratives captured by Chanza (2014) from local citizens of flood hit Muzarabani, Zimbabwe says:

We can use canoes made from barks of trees that we call Hwato. We use these to sail across the flooded rivers so as to rescue people who would have been trapped on the other side of the river. If anyone gets drowned in the waters we can even get there with our ropes. But the operation needs very brave men since the waters will be so powerful that you risk being swayed away yourself. These ropes are tied around the victim's waist before carefully dragging him/her for safety.

Grothmann and Reusswing (2006) also observe that communities at risk of flooding devise heterogeneous options for self-protection that would reduce their vulnerability. In a similar observation, Penning-Roswell *et al* (2013) observe that the capability of the affected people to exploit various adaptation options enhances their resilience against climate-related hazards and would consider migration as a last resort.

ICK and food security

Food insecurity is one of the most devastating impacts of climate change in Africa (Thornton *et al.*, 2006; Boko *et al.*, 2007; Nyong *et al.*, 2007; IPCC, 2014a). In Zimbabwe, Mararike

(2001) and Chanza (2014) observe that indigenous rural communities have strong traditional networks that they rely on to enhance their food security in the event of such climatic disturbances as floods, drought and dry spells. Chanza's (2014) participatory interactions with elderly members in Muzarabani, a remote rural area north of Zimbabwe identified three vital strategies adopted by the locals, which if effectively harnessed serve to enhance community's adaptive capacity (see Table 3).

Table 3: Indigenous food security enhancement strategies in Zimbabwe

Strategy	Description
<i>Zunde raMambo</i>	A rural project for enhancing social nets of disadvantaged members of a community involving setting aside farming land under the supervision of a chief.
<i>Rain-petitioning ceremonies</i>	These are meant to enlist the intercession of <i>mbondoro</i> (spirits) to bring rainfall especially before the onset of rainfall season or during mid-season dry spells. Various names such as Huruwa, Mukwerera and Makoto are given to these ceremonies in rural Zimbabwe.
<i>Nhimbe</i>	A term from the Shona people of Zimbabwe entailing collective community effort where people pull their resources together for some field work or any other community task.

Source: Chanza, 2014

Zunde raMambo project is capable of enhancing social protection against such problems as famine, particularly to the vulnerable members of society. Mararike's (2001) analysis shows that the strategy has a long history as a traditional social welfare practice in rural Zimbabwe (see Box 4). As such, it is important in addressing food insecurity threats resulting from

drought and crop damages by floods and hailstorms, which are climate related.

Box 4: A description of the Zunde raMambo project

Zunde is a Shona word that may mean a large gathering of people taking part in a common activity or may refer to plenty of grain stored for future use by people in a particular community. However, *Zunde* normally means an informal, in-built social, economic and political mechanism. Its primary aim was to ensure that a particular community had adequate food reserves that could be used in times of food shortage. The *Zunde* practice ensured that food security for a village(s) was guaranteed at all times. A Chief designated a piece of land for cultivation by his subjects. The yield from this land was stored in granaries (*Zunde raMambo*) at the Chief's compound. The food was also used to feed the Chief's soldiers, subjects awaiting trial, the Chief's advisors, and the destitute, as well as travellers who stopped in the village for the night. Village ceremonies such as burials also benefited from the *Zunde raMambo* food reserves. The main beneficiaries were, however, the villagers themselves during times of food shortages.

Zunde was perceived not only as a crop production activity whose main objective was to address food shortages, but was also regarded as a social, economic and political rallying mechanism. The chief to control his people and to ensure their safety used it. Participation in the *Zunde raMambo* was an expression of oneness and carried with it social and moral obligations. Food was perceived not only as a means of meeting nutritional requirements, but also as a social tool which brought people together to share their successes and/or failures.

(Source: Mararike, 2001: 54-55)

In Zimbabwe, *nhimbe* (collective work) is an indigenous scheme that serves to enhance household and community food security. In practice, it involves mutual aid through collective sharing of resources by members of a community. Accordingly, this co-operation ideology fosters responsibility by countering a dependency syndrome that has generally captivated a donor

dependent African society. In Chanza's (2014) analysis, the strategy ensures that agricultural duties such as planting, weeding and harvesting are done speedily and timeously. Through the collective sharing of family labour, ingenuity and farming implements, locals are able to maximise land productivity, which is an important strategy to mitigate potential famine. In addition, the social capital shared extend to incorporate such other vulnerable members in the villages as widows, child-headed households, people living with disabilities and old people. In essence, the collective pull of local capital is necessary to avoid overreliance on outside assistance. Through its major tenets of solidarity, co-operation, trust, honesty, respect, allegiance and reciprocity, adopting this strategy is a climate proofing mechanism. When viewed from a food security perspective, the concept serves to strengthen the social nets of a community against the risk posed by climatic events such as droughts and floods.

Communities in many places of Africa believe that their ancestors have powers to influence the climate system (Vijfhuizen, 1997; Muhando, 2005; Mararike, 2011; Chanza; 2014). As such, they unceasingly enlist the help of the ancestry for a good rainfall season. In Zimbabwe, for example, one of the traditional leaders interviewed by Chanza (2014) shared this:

We have our own traditional ways of getting rains through traditional beers. If we religiously adhere to the requirements those who visit Dendemaro would hardly get back home without rains pouring on them. Long ago Mbuya Nehanda and Sekuru Mupfudzi were the rain-petitioners. These would go with a snuffbox to Mutota, who would then pass it to Chingovo, then to Musumba. Musumba was a Nyusa (svikiro remvura) whose forehead could be seen shining when it was time for rain. The problem nowadays is that some people are no longer interested in these ceremonies and view them as archaic, primitive and anti-Christian. Even if we follow the advice that we get

from these government extension officers, but mikweverera yedu hatiregi (we won't abandon our rain-petitioning ceremonies).

The insistence reported here reveals that such communities have strong faith in the rain-petitioning ceremonies, which they see not only as blessings in getting good rainy seasons, but also as a religious practice to keep ties with their ancestry for spiritual wellbeing. Mawere (2013b; 2015) criticises the term 'rain-making ceremonies' that has widely, but wrongly, been deployed by many scholars in reference to rain-petitioning ceremonies. He argues that the usage of the terminology 'rain-making ceremonies' was mainly by colonialists and Euro-centric scholars to mock our forebears. According to him, our forebears never prophesised that they had the ability to make rain through these ceremonies as was later purported by colonialists and Euro-centric scholars. What they did was petitioning rain from God through their *Manyusa masvikiro emvura* (rain spirit mediums) and ancestors. A similar reliance on the favour of the ancestors in having a good climate is also reported by Egeru (2012) among the locals in Eastern Uganda (see Box 5).

Box 5: Significance of rain-petitioning ceremonies in Eastern Uganda

In the event of drought, a diviner would be anointed by calling of the ancestors; he/she would be the one to mobilise the people of a particular village to organise a rain-making ceremony (*elelekeja*). The diviner would advise on the food items to be cooked according to the revelations obtained from the ancestors. The rain-making ceremony included construction of an entrance near a big tree closer to the wetlands. Food and local brew (*ajon*) would be served, dancing and singing and mud smearing would be performed. During dancing and singing, participants would chant Rain! Rain! Rain! (Akiru! Akiru!). This was an act of invoking the ancestors to grant them rain. After the ceremony, only men were allowed back to the ceremonial grounds until rains fell.

(Source: Egeru, 2012: 219)

The significance of these indigenous safety nets deserves emphasis in the current food insecurity challenges posed by climate change. Kaseke (2006) and Mapfumo *et al* (2010) share a similar thinking that strategies such as *Zunde raMambo* strengthen local safety nets against climatic aberrations. According to Mapfumo *et al* (2010: 3) “strengthening local institutional capacity to revitalise community safety nets is an essential ingredient for supporting smallholder adaptation to climatic shocks.” The authors argue that weakening local food security systems and the increasing collapse of traditional social safety nets are the major drivers of vulnerability to food insecurity brought about by climate change in many rural African communities.

ICK and disaster risk management

It should be pointed out here that the preceding discussed climatic threats (drought, floods and food insecurity) are potential sources of disasters. As such, the strategies and practices analysed can also be deployed in the field of disaster management. According to IPCC (2012), disaster risk management (DRM) is about designing, implementing, and evaluating strategies, policies, and measures with the intention of fostering disaster risk reduction and promoting continuous improvement in disaster preparedness, response, and recovery practices. The intention of such a strategy is to secure human lives and livelihoods. With reference to climate-related disasters, Wilbanks *et al* (2007) explain that a DRM strategy should keep climate change impacts as low as possible. Through their ICK, indigenous communities are capable of devising mitigation strategies against climate hazards. Bollig and Schulte (1999) point out that oral accounts by the elders can be useful to unearth evidence of changes in the climate and associated disasters as they are understood by the locals. To Salick and Byg (2007), local people can devise appropriate adaptive mechanisms for coping with climate irregularities since they are keen observers of the phenomenon.

ICK and ecosystem-based adaptation

Ecosystem-based adaptation (EBA) is defined by Munang *et al* (2013) as “the use of natural capital by people to adapt to climate change impacts, which can also have multiple co-benefits for mitigation, protection of livelihoods and poverty alleviation.” Sperenza *et al* (2009) investigate the IK held by the agro-pastoralists in the Makueni District, Kenya. Although on a limited scale of adoption, the authors observe that agro-pastoralists in Kenya use their local knowledge for exploiting ecosystem services in the context of drought. Berkes *et al* (2000) list several strategies relevant in EBA in many parts of Africa (see Table 4). According to the authors, along their social mechanisms, communities use their ecological knowledge to manage ecosystems. This unique combination empowers the locals to exploit various ecosystem services (for example, food, water, medicines, biodiversity, etc.), practices that strengthens their capability to adapt to climate change.

Table 4: Traditional ecological knowledge strategies for EBA

MANAGEMENT PRACTICES BASED ON ECOLOGICAL KNOWLEDGE	SOCIAL MECHANISMS BEHIND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES
<i>Practices found both in conventional resource management and in some local and traditional societies</i> • Monitoring resource abundance and change in ecosystems • Total protection of certain species • Protection of vulnerable life history stages • Protection of specific habitats	<i>Generation, accumulation and transmission of local ecological knowledge</i> • Reinterpreting signals of learning • Revival of local knowledge • Folklore and knowledge carriers • Integration of knowledge • Intergenerational transmission of knowledge • Geographical diffusion of knowledge

• Temporary restrictions of haverst	
<i>Practices largely abandoned by conventional resource management but still found in some local and traditional societies</i> • Multiple species management; maintaing ecosystem structure and function • Resource rotation • Succession management	<i>Structure and dynamics of institutions</i> • Role of stewards/wise people • Cross scale institutions • Community assessments • Taboos and regulations • Social and religious sanctions
<i>Practices related to the dynamics of complex systems, sledom found in conventional resource management but found in some traditional societies</i> • Management of landscape patchiness • Watershed-based management • Managing of ecological processes at multiple scales • Responding to and manging pulses and surprises • Nurturing sources of ecosystem renewal	<i>Mechanisms for cultural internalisation</i> • Rituals, eceremonies and other tradtions • Cultural frameworks for resource management <i>World view and cultural values</i> • A world view that provides appropriate environmnetal ethics • Cultural value of respect, sharing, reciprocity, humility, and other

(Source: Modified after Berkes *et al.*, 2000: 1253)

Sustainable Adaptation Strategies: from an ICK perspective

The question on whether counter-measures to withstand the impacts of climate change are sustainable is increasingly being interrogated in adaptation policy and practice (Duerden, 2004; Thomkins & Adger 2005; IPCC, 2007; Nyong *et al.*, 2007; Bizikova, 2012). When human make adaptation choices,

their intention is to make sure that they recover from climatic shocks or exploit the available benefits brought by climatic stimuli so as to maintain or advance their livelihoods. This means for adaptation strategies to be sustainable, they should both help in strengthening the resilience of communities and offer numerous opportunities for societies to be livelihoods secure. The United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID) says: "A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks and maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets both now and in the future, while not undermining the natural resource base" (DFID, 2000: 1).

Climate change tends to worsen the vulnerability of indigenous African communities by bringing about stresses and shocks that destabilises livelihoods. Such shocks as drought, floods and violent storms potentiated by climate change tend to weaken the capabilities of poor communities to adjust as their assets are either damaged or constrained. From the IPCC's latest assessment reports, these climatic perturbations are numerous and in Africa, they tend to stymie the realisation of the millennium development goals (IPCC, 2014b) (see Table 4). Already most governments in Africa are grappling with climate change and are compelled to divert scarce resources from development projects to adaptation initiatives such as meeting the food security requirements of citizens affected by drought (for example, in Zimbabwe, Malawi and Kenya) and floods (as in Nigeria, Mozambique and South Africa).

Table 4: Climate change impacts and the MDGs

Potential impacts	Millennium Development Goal
Climate Change may reduce poor people's livelihood assets, for example health, access to water, homes and infrastructure. It may also alter the path and rate of economic growth due to changes in natural systems and resources, infrastructure and labour productivity. A reduction in economic growth directly impacts poverty through reduced income opportunities. Expected impacts on regional food security are likely, particularly in Africa, where food security is expected to worsen	Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger (Goal 1)
Climate change is likely to directly impact children and pregnant women because they are particularly susceptible to vector- and water-borne diseases, e.g., malaria is currently responsible for a quarter of maternal mortality. Other expected impacts include: • increased heat-related mortality and illness associated with heat waves (which may be balanced by less winter-cold-related deaths in some countries); • increased prevalence of some vector-borne diseases (e.g., malaria, dengue fever), and vulnerability to water, food or person-to-person diseases (e.g. cholera, dysentery) • declining quantity and quality of drinking water, which worsens malnutrition, since it is a prerequisite for good health; • reduced natural resource productivity and threatened food security, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa	Health-related goals: • reduce infant mortality (Goal 4); • improve maternal health (Goal 5); • combat major diseases (Goal 6).
Climate change may alter the quality and	Ensure

productivity of natural resources and ecosystems, some of which may be irreversibly damaged, and these changes may also decrease biological diversity and compound existing environmental degradation. Climate change would alter the ecosystem-human interfaces and interactions that may lead to loss of biodiversity and hence erode the basic support systems for the livelihood of many people in Africa.	environmental sustainability (Goal 7)
Links to climate change include: • Loss of livelihood assets (natural, health, financial and physical capital) may reduce opportunities for full time education in numerous ways. • Natural disasters and drought reduce children's available time (which may be diverted to household tasks), while displacement and migration can reduce access to education opportunities	Achieve universal primary education (Goal 2)
One of the expected impacts of climate change is that it could exacerbate current gender inequalities, through impacting on the natural resource base, leading to decreasing agricultural productivity. This may place additional burdens on women's health, and reduce time available to participate in decision-making and for practicing income-generation activities. Climate-related disasters have been found to impact female-headed households, particularly where they have fewer assets.	Promote gender equality and empower women (Goal 3)
Global climate change is a global issue, and responses require global co-operation, especially to help developing countries adapt to the adverse impacts of climate change.	Global partnerships (Goal 8)

(Source: Boko *et al.*, 2007: 458)

It should be underlined here that local people do not just passively observe the climatic events. Instead, they actively draw their capital to cope and adapt to the changing environment. It has been argued in this chapter that utilisation of ICK offer several opportunities to local people experiencing climate change. Such opportunities are seen through widening choices in the adaptation toolbox, identifying practical, tried and experimented strategies and practices, availability of local capital which serve as strategic resource that the people can easily access, and continuous improvement in knowledge and practices as the people continue to witness variable magnitude and degree of climatic events. Accordingly, such an ICK perspective can be a useful ingredient in promoting local sustainability. Furthermore, the fact that this knowledge form has resiliently stood the threats of Western-based interventions and the pressures of modernity is clear evidence of its sustainability. This knowledge form, according to Cawood and Ehlers (2007), demonstrates a community's proven pragmatism in dealing with their immediate context. This pragmatism is vital for adaptation strategies to be successful, effective and sustainable. Welp *et al* (2006) show that the knowledge is capable of prescribing practical solutions for mitigating against and adapting to global change. According to Duerden (2004) this is possibly made easier since the knowledge is deeply ingrained in local people's understanding and is always accessible to them. Berkes (2000) corroborates when he argues that ICK builds ecological resilience at community level. This resilience is necessary to enable the community to recover from climatic shocks.

It should also be understood that the impacts of climate change are worsening amidst limited attention in national planning and budgetary allocations for adaptation interventions in most African governments. At global level, commitment in adaptation financing remains undesirable. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)'s first adaptation report, released at the 20th Conference of Parties (COP 20) meeting

held from 1st to 12th December 2014, in Lima, Peru decries shortfalls in adaptation funds. The report species that in a best case scenario (associated with meeting the temperature reduction target, which is highly unlikely owing to limitations in mitigation), the cost of adaptation will be 2 to 3 times higher than the previously anticipated US\$70-100 billion per year by 2050. In a worst case scenario (the business as usual approach), adaptation costs will double these figures (UNEP, 2014). Clearly, there is need to strengthen capacities of indigenous African communities to exploit their ICK for advancing adaptation objectives, instead of heavily relying on unreliable external funding.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that indigenous-based knowledge is capable of guiding successful and effective adaptation policy and practice in Africa. Essentially, the question of whether current adaptation orientation is sustainable or not can be addressed by engaging indigenous communities whose many years of direct contact with the environment have equipped them with the indispensable ICK, skills and experiences to perpetuate livelihoods and build resilient societies in Africa. Accordingly, indigenous-based climate change adaptation should be a policy and planning imperative. Thus, in the current tempo where adaptation researchers seek answers to sustainable adaptation orientation, where policy makers grapple with conflicting and complex adaptation policy options, and where practitioners face implementation challenges in adaptation strategies, the potential utility of ICK in these discussions deserves some serious attention. The merits of this ICK imperative towards sustainable climate change interventions are numerous. For instance, firstly, indigenous-based adaptation enables communities at risk to find mechanisms for enhancing adaptive capacity and their resilience against climate change through exploiting tried

strategies, activities and practices. Secondly, the inclusion of indigenous people in climate discourse and regimes is empowering and decolonising since it equally regards them as scientists capable of informing climate change science. Thirdly, their practical engagement is a strategy to operationalise climate governance which has largely remained rhetoric in Africa. Fourthly, the practice responds to the desired human rights, ethics and justice issues in climate regimes. Finally, this is a platform for meaningful involvement of indigenous people in the perpetual continuity of their IKS, a hallmark of sustainable development.

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Chapter 5

Non-governmental Organisations (NGOs) and the Politics of Development and Sustainability in Africa: A Critical Appraisal of the Involvement of NGOs in Sustainable Development in Zimbabwe

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Introduction

The rural communities in many of the so-called “Third World” countries in Africa have been characterised by the lack of what many economists and developmentalists call ‘development’. The efforts to develop such areas have been so marginal to the extent that the people who live in such areas are just poor and live far below the poverty datum line (See Ellis 1998; James 1954). By poverty datum line we mean the cost of a given standard of living that must be attained if a person is deemed not to be poor (Zimstat 2014). It should be noted, however, that poverty datum line varies from place to place depending on the variations in prices. Nevertheless, living below poverty datum line means, according to some scholars, that the people would be living at less than one US dollar per day. Taking the example of Zimbabwe, the poverty among her rural communities has been so pronounced because the people have been found lacking in virtually all spheres of life as defined by developmentalists such as health, education, clean water, road network, communication network, electricity, security and other such amenities (cf. Mawere 2011). Besides, most of the people in these communities live at less than one US dollar per day, which entails they live below poverty datum line. Life in the rural communities in a Third World country such as Zimbabwe is souring, difficult, and challenging especially in the

face of money economy and constant drought and famine threats that have characterised the area. We should underscore that by rural communities, we mean such communities found in the country side, and are characterised by lack of amenities such as electricity, tapped water, tarred roads, communication networks and so forth.

In the recent years in Zimbabwe's rural communities as those of Africa in general, poverty in these communities has been one of the instruments that drives people away – push factors –to search better sources of livelihoods elsewhere particularly in towns or growth points. In such communities, the vulnerable who are individuals in a state of lack such as women, children, the uneducated, the physically challenged, and the aged would always need assistance from those that are well resourced so that they can have a decent living or at least are covered from the vagaries and harshness that come along with socio-economic development. Yet, permanent solutions to such communities are more urgent than ever especially in the 21st century where the talk of the need to eradicate poverty from the face of the world is louder than ever.

The aforementioned challenges have necessitated the need for helping hands to partner government to find solution to some of the challenges confronting Zimbabwe today. One of such helping hands that visibly come to mind is NGOs. This chapter, therefore, problematizes the conceptualisation of NGO examines the matrix and relationships between rural communities and NGOs in the logic of development of communities in Africa's developing countries, and in particular Zimbabwe. It further explores the complexities and politics that define the involvement of NGOs in the development equation and quest for sustainability in rural communities in Zimbabwe as elsewhere in Africa.

Understanding NGOs

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are not easy to define such that the term 'NGO' itself is rarely used with consistence due to differences in their level of operation (i.e. whether local, national or international) and orientation (i.e. the types of activities it takes on) (Vakil 1997). The term NGO was first coined in 1945 when an inter-governmental organisation, the United Nations (UN) was formed (Davies 2014a). The UN approved and made possible the existence of specialised international non-states agencies such as NGOs to be awarded observer status at its assemblies and some of its meetings. It is only after this incident that the word NGO became widely used to refer to any non-profit, voluntary citizens' groups which are organised on a local, national or international level are task oriented and driven by people with a common interest (Ibid). For the World Bank (1996: 4), NGOs "are private organisations that pursue activities to relieve suffering, promote the interests of the poor, protect the environment, provide basic social services, or undertake community development." Diverse as human interests themselves, NGOs are highly diverse engaging in a wide range of activities. By their very nature, NGOs are neither part of a government nor meant for profit making such as they perform a variety of service and charitable or humanitarian functions including advocating and monitoring policies and encourage people participation in issues affecting their lives such as politics, health, education, religion, environment, development, climate change, and business-related activities, through provision of information. Yet as usually a product and initiative of ordinary people with particular interests, NGOs are normally funded by businesses, private persons, foundations, or governments to the extent that sometimes they compete with governments of the people they are serving. For this reason, some scholars such as Mudingu (2006) view NGOs as a new form of colonialism especially in this wave of globalisation after the

collapse of the regimes in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. For Mudingu, NGOs have taken up as their main task the neutralisation of the ill-effects of globalisation and liberalisation. They [NGOs] are in fact, not against globalisation per se, but only try to dilute the wrath of the majority in poor countries against imperialism and veer the poor to reformist ideology by trying to convince them that it is possible to reform the imperialist agencies such as World Bank, IMF and others. Mudingu even charges that though known as non-profit organisations, some NGOs actually work for increasing the imperialists' profits.

We argue that to eschew government influence on their activities and perceptions as those by Mudingu, some NGOs avoid formal funding from the government such that they are primarily run by volunteers. It is this tenet that NGOs normally enjoy a high degree of public trust which in turn can make them a useful but not always sufficient proxy for the concerns of society and stakeholders (Davies 2014b).

As alluded to above, NGOs can be understood by their level of operation and orientation. While in terms of level of operation, NGOs can operate at local (i.e. school, district, town, city etc.), national or international level, in terms of orientation, and as expounded by Lynn Lawry (2009), NGOs can assume any of the following:

Charitable

Charitable orientation NGO(s) often involves a top-down paternalistic effort with little participation by the beneficiaries. Such NGOs include those with activities directed towards meeting the needs of the poor and the aged. Thus, unlike other forms of NGOs that call for maximum participation of the beneficiaries, charitable NGOs normally stand on the donating end while beneficiaries stand on the receiving end.

Service

Service orientation NGO(s) includes those with activities such as the provision of health, family planning, education and others offering services in which programmes are designed by the NGO and people are expected to participate in the implementation of the programmes and in receiving the services.

Participatory

Participatory orientation NGOs are often characterised by self-help projects where local people are involved particularly in the implementation of a project by contributing cash, tools, land, materials, labour and other resources. In such projects, participation begins with the need definition and continues right into the planning and implementation stages.

Empowering

Empowering orientation NGOs aim to help poor, disadvantaged, and vulnerable people develop a clearer understanding and strengthen their awareness of the problems they are facing in spheres of life such as social, political, environmental, economic and educational, among others. The beneficiaries are also assisted to realise their potential power to control their destinies. In such NGOs' programmes, participation of the beneficiaries is maximum with NGOs acting as facilitators or brokers.

It should be underscored that the term NGO is sometimes used interchangeably with many alternative or overlapping terms such as non-state actor (NSA), self-help organisation (SHO), private voluntary organisation (PVO), social movement organisation (SMO), grassroots organisation (GO), civil society organisation (CSO), Voluntary organisation (VO), third sector organisation (TSO), and non-profit organisation (NPO) (see also Karla 1999; Willetts 2001).

Furthermore, NGOs' aid is more often than not portrayed as altruistic, a charitable act that enables wealth to flow from

the rich to the poor, poverty to be reduced (or even eradicated) and the poor empowered (see Shivji 2007 : vii). For some other international agencies, NGOs “are saints. They do no evil: they are not corrupt: they are for the poor: and above all are the ‘third eye’” (see Ezeoha 2001: 128). Yet, some scholars such as David Sogge (2002) take such kind of beliefs as mere utterances of belief or at best half-truths which should be queried. Such criticisms necessitate further research on what NGOs should do in terms of the role they are expected to play in society. And, many “now ask whether NGOs are really progressive partners in the quest for sustainable development” (Ezeoha: *ibid*). It is such questioning that has prompted us to research around the role of NGOs in fostering sustainable development and reduce poverty and social ills in Africa, and particularly in Zimbabwe.

NGOs and African rural communities: What role for NGOs?

Many NGOs from across the globe believe that they have an obligation to protect, in one way or another, the so called vulnerable. This is regardless of their orientation as charitable, service, participatory, or empowering NGOs. In view of this obligation, every NGO has got a specific mandate that it pursues in a given community. In fact, NGOs believe in being there for someone and not everyone, given that they are task-oriented.

Since their inception in 1945 and with the birth of the UN Human Rights Charter in 1948, many NGOs have always emphasised the protection of life as they felt compelled to ensure that life is saved if ever possible. They have, therefore, directed their resources towards this cause. Michael (2002) is apt in observing that the successes of the NGOs (such as BRAC in Bangladesh, the United Way in the United States, Amnesty International, and Worldlife Fund) in providing healthcare, education, economic opportunities and human rights advocacy to millions is actually known and greatly

appreciated. He urges other NGOs to engage in similar activities of fostering and providing quality education, healthcare, and basic needs to the poor and those communities in need. Michael's observation confirms that NGOs have a critical role in protecting and preserving humanity. She, thus, argues:

NGOs as one of the most visible sets of actors in the related fields of human development and human rights, can play a significant role in helping to achieve human security. NGOs are especially well suited to action for human security because of their size and reach, closeness to local populations, willingness to confront the status quo, and ability to address transnational threats through coalition-building (p. 2).

In developing countries such as those of Africa, while NGOs had some presence since the post-second world war period, they flourished in the 1980s and 1990s as structural adjustment programmes were imposed across Africa by international financial institutions and development agencies such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) as African countries were busy retrenching their own workers. At the time, many NGOs from the West and the Americas had funds available from their funding governments to make sure that NGOs had profound impact in the minimisation of the envisaged inequalities perpetuated by the African states' forced policies. Surprisingly, the funds were not as well made available to African states to help out their numerous populations they had retrenched. No wonder some scholars such as Abel Ezeoha (2001: 128) argues that "in some countries, NGOs are as powerful (if not more powerful than) national governments. They command a wider access to foreign aid than the respective governments where they operate".

From the foregoing, we should underline that in the '80s and '90s, the entrance of NGOs in many African countries was strategic as they [NGOs] were understood as organisations coming to take over the work of the retrenching states of Africa that had been persuaded by development agencies and international financial institutions to disengage most of their workers. It is in this sense that it was widely perceived, at least during the time in Africa, that it is inopportune events and problems that affect the vulnerable which normally persuade NGOs to converge towards ensuring that the victims are assisted out of these problems. It is also this rationale which found former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan defining human security as 'freedom from want' and 'freedom from fear' and urging the global community, which is predominantly NGOs to adopt a people-centred approach to security in their work (see Michael, 2002). A people-centred approach enables active participation of the beneficiaries in terms of project planning and implementation.

In pursuing their agenda to serve local communities, the NGOs have been playing a significant role in ensuring that normalcy returns in people's lives whenever there are challenges that the locals fail to handle by themselves or using their local and meagre resources. It is, however, this same role that at times NGOs are not understood by critical observers in the communities. More deserving situations have at times been ignored while non-deserving situations have immensely benefitted in a manner that is puzzling and defeats the logic of donor funding. Such situations have also resulted in mistrust and suspicion of NGOs by local governments. Talking of the situation in Zimbabwe during the time she carried out her research with NGOs, Jeater (2011) notes that Aid agencies are mistrusted because they are perceived as part of the political strategies of donor governments whether directly funded through organisations such as USAID, NORAD, or indirectly through the various arms of the UN. In Kenya, Karanja (2014) recently reported that the government deregistered fifteen

NGOs over terrorism funding claims. As further revealed by Karanja, the NGOs Co-ordination Board has also deregistered another 510 charitable organisations for failing to file their audited reports as required by law, frozen their accounts and acquired their assets for redistributing to other NGOs pursuing similar activities. Such instances as experienced in Kenya could be interpreted to mean that there are other factors considered other than the obtaining environment, which explains why some commentators have concluded that the participation of NGOs in the development of rural communities is influenced by other forces that might be invisible. To avoid mistrust and situations as that recently obtained in Kenya, Jeater (2011) advises that Aid agencies need to distance themselves from any suspicion of complicity with corrupt or inept local institutions, whether governmental or from civil society. The diplomatic relationship between the country in need and the country from which the NGO hails thus has a bearing on how they respond to calls for assistance.

Africa and in particular sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), for example, in Mozambique and Zimbabwe, has especially since the colonial period, been characterised by externally-initiated conflicts, poverty and lack of economic development. This is to some extent, consistent with Ali Mazrui's (1980) assertion that Africa is highly fragmented, lacks development which fuels conflict. Such externally-initiated conflict has subjected women to despicable and horrendous violations including rape, gang rape at times, abductions, sexual slavery and forced marriages. It has also exposed other vulnerable groups such as children, the aged, the physically and visually-challenged at greater risk, which in no doubt necessitated intervention especially that of civil society who are perceived as neutral custodians of peace. Such evil activities were witnessed, over the years, in racialized, hunger-wretched, and conflict-torn violence in African countries such as Mozambique, South Africa, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, DRC and many other conflict hot spots in the continent.

In contexts as those highlighted above, Michael (2002) observed that NGOs and not governments or the United Nations agencies should be the most prominent advocates of international human rights, advocating on behalf of groups that include women, children, political activists, AIDS sufferers, minority groups and other vulnerable groups faced with the challenges. Michael (2002) further observed that while the total of aid receipts on the continent have nosedived by more than 20% since 1994, the non-governmental organisations have increasingly been recipients of the donor funding that does arrive on the continent. Moreover, in 1999, both the Americans and Dutch governments decided to channel an increasing proportion of their development aid in Africa away from governments but towards NGOs. In the ten years between 1984 and 1994, the British government increased its funding to the Northern NGOs in Africa by almost 400 per cent to £68,700,00 (Shivji 2007: viii). Any critical thinker would want to understand why this was done when it is the governments who possess a constitutional mandate to provide for their people. This would help in explaining the puzzle surrounding the politics at play in the logic of donor-funding and the of development discourse.

These views seem to suggest that NGOs are indeed a critical player in dealing with issues that relate to the vulnerable, who just anybody else deserve a decent life. It is also the NGOs through their varying lobby groups that influence policy dimensions to advance the cause of the vulnerable. The World Bank (1996: 1), for example, stated that it recognises the important role the nongovernmental organisations, both local and international, play in meeting the challenges of development.

The need for assistance from NGOs not only in Africa seems to be even increasing as the need for political and economic development at global level also increases. As the world continues to revolve, there will always be some groups of people such as the physically challenged, the mentally

challenged, the aged, orphans as well as abandoned children who would need to be cushioned either by the government machinery or by the well-wishers. The reality has been that many governments across Africa have been struggling to the extent that they have for a long time failed or are failing to adequately meet the needs of these vulnerable groups. It is in this view that some people believe that the involvement of NGOs is a blessing to both the government and the people.

It has empirically been proved that government structures are inefficient, bureaucratic and fragile in the face of economic challenges while NGOs have proved to be efficient, pragmatic and sensitive. Sabina Alkire (2002) argues that governments have the responsibility and obligation to provide human security to their citizens yet, the reality is that many of them have been unable to tackle the human security needs of their populations on their own. Evidence abound that shows that most governments in Africa have for a long time failed to meet the needs of their populations alone. NGOs are thus a very central and critical leg in the development matrix, but how these should participate in a way that does not create conflict with the governments of the countries they operate remains a grand question to address especially in practice.

NGOs and the challenge of participation in Africa: The Zimbabwean case

NGOs are diverse and by no means are all equally laudable (GPF, 2012). While a number of NGOs particularly those in Zimbabwe have done tremendously important humanitarian work, for example, in the area of education and health sectors, some have undermined the credibility of the larger NGOs movement through their suspicious activities and associations. Put differently, even though NGO participation in Zimbabwe, as elsewhere in Africa, has been hailed and applauded it has descended with its own share of challenges. The challenges have partly been a result of irresponsible actions by some

NGOs during execution of their mission and mandate. In fact, though some NGOs act responsibly, others do not thereby undermining the credibility and legitimacy of the larger NGO movement. In many African countries, such problematic NGOs have been used by some governments as justification for refusal of donor funding to the poverty-wretched populations. These governments accuse NGOs of incompetence arguing that the NGOs need to be as accountable as the very governments they critique.

The other major challenge which incidentally is related to the beneficiaries has been their failure to graduate from the 'culture of receipt' or what others call 'dependency syndrome'. The 'culture of receipt' arises when an individual continues to receive to the extent that the person ceases to use their initiative to grow out of the culture. It is a culture that creates over dependence. The 'culture of receipt' has been known to promote indolence as well as cultivates poverty, both mental and material among communities. With commitment, empowerment, and knowledge, a community can surely graduate from aid dependency. This can be seen from the historical stories of Taiwan, South Korea, and Botswana, among other countries.

Besides, many NGOs have met with criticism from governments of the countries they are serving, accused of working under the influence of their own mother governments and corporate donors. A study by the University of Manchester has questioned the legitimacy of large development NGOs, saying that they are heavily influenced by corporate donors and governments where they come from (Tran, 2012). The results have since sparked heated debate about development programmes that are too slanted towards aid rather targeting the structural causes of poverty in the poverty-stricken communities. Many NGOs in Zimbabwe have since met this challenge. The Herald [October 17, 2011] carried a story in which the Western countries were being lambasted for fermenting political instability and pursue a regime change

agenda in Zimbabwe. The Local Government, Rural and Urban Planning Minister had it that while the efforts of NGOs was being acknowledged and appreciated by the government in various rural communities, no government would remain mute if they overstepped. The minister reminded these NGOs that they were supposed to play a complimentary role to government of the people they are serving. They were not supposed to act as though they are rivals and in competition with government. For the Minister, acting in that manner was not only unacceptable but unfortunate and unprofessional since all NGO must work with an approved Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Operating or engaging in areas outside the MOU was thus tantamount to terroristic intentions directed towards unseating a constitutionally elected government.

Yet, contrary to the Minister's stance narrated above, Michael (2002) believes, rather strongly, that no other actor seems to be better placed than NGOs to deal with human security such as confronting directly the underlying political issues which affects human security. NGOs, through civic education encourage the popular political participation of the masses which reduces insecurities. Michael goes on to argue that 'no discussion of poverty, equality or development today is complete without considering the role of NGOs. Whether in the North or the South, NGOs are a visible, respected and entrenched part of many societies' (p. 3). The problem between states and NGOs, however, arises when NGOs try to include mass mobilisation, lobbying and advocacy activities against the host government in their portfolio of activities. This is normally understood by host governments as works of terrorism and not humanitarian or charitable work.

More so, some NGOs have met with resistance from the people they are trying to help for the major reason that they decide and dictate programmes to the people. In many African countries, for example, Zimbabwe, it is widely known that NGOs decide or define programmes that they bring into a

community as opposed to having the communities decide what they think is necessary for their community (Fieldnotes 2011). It was reported by majority of our interlocutors in Mashonaland West that some programmes fail at times mainly because of the ‘them and us syndrome’ between the community and the NGOs. The ‘them’ and ‘us’ syndrome is not quite functional and it betrays the millennium goal of sustainable development to which Twiqq (2004) argues that participatory approaches may be more cost effective in the long term than externally driven initiatives partly because they are more likely to be sustainable (see also Ellis 1998; Carney 1998; Chambers and Conway 1992; Cavendish 2001; Tarimo 2012; Baregu 1998; Wiseberg 1992). We argue in view of Twiqq’s argument above that the process of involving communities allows ideas generated to be tested, retested and refined before adoption. Also, working with the local communities as equal partners helps the professional NGOs to gain a greater insight into such communities they seek to serve, enabling them to work more effectively and produce better results. On this note, we argue with Mudigu (2006) that the imposition of programmes on locals is actually a political gimmick based on the imperialistic thinking that ‘he who owns the people plays the tune’.

The above reflections and critics of NGOs do not mean that they are unimportant. NGOs, both within Zimbabwe and elsewhere in the world are undoubtedly the essential players in peace building, education, and promotion of a health environment. Those NGOs that are really genuine, desire to see peace flourishing. This is because they understand that human development is only possible in an environment characterised by enduring peace. Through their diverse mandates and constitutions, NGOs come up with various programmes that seek to promote development. In Zimbabwe, for instance, NGOs such as UNICEF and Save the Children have been instrumental in promoting education for all and building a firm foundation for enduring peace. This is what

scholars like Dodo (2012) mean when he says in a democratic society the poor need some enabling measures in order to participate effectively in programmes that give value to their lives. They need to be organised and trained on how to claim their legal rights effectively and that can only be undertaken through education, hence the commendable work by NGOs such as UNICEF and Save the Child.

Recommendations

Since their inception in 1945, NGOs have been known to be independent. It is such independence that gives them power which at times is misunderstood yet as Michael (2002) believes, NGOs are indeed one of the many bodies that have shown themselves to be strategically positioned to complement or supplement the human security effort of government agencies around the world. Nevertheless, some NGOs' failure to realise this independence and the neutral role they should play in society have resulted in them encountering serious challenges in countries or communities where they operate. Basing on our findings, the challenges heralded and discussed in this chapter are addressable as long as commitment is exhibited. In this section, we give a number of recommendations that can be adopted by non-governmental organisations to deal with some of the challenges. These include, but not limited to, the following:

■ *Forming creative alliances*

To effectively tackle global poverty, inequality, injustice and other such problems that face the poor, NGOs should consider forming creative alliances. In this respect, Stephen Hale, Oxfam International Deputy Advocacy and Campaigns Director's observation is apt. For Hale (2011), NGOs must pursue new and perhaps unexpected alliances to successfully effect change. Hale, thus, argues that creative alliances achieve

a number of purposes including broadening and deepening public support and NGO capacity building.

■ *Refuse funding from suspicious institutions and governments*

To maintain a good image, NGOs should refuse funding from suspicious institutions and governments. Accepting funding from such institutions normally compromise the quality of work to be executed by the NGOs. In an article in Bangkok Post by Kultida Samabuddhi (2011) titled: “Money can taint NGO’s clean image,” for example, it is revealed that the Seub Nakhasatien Foundation, a prominent Thai environmental NGO accepted 25.89 million baht – approx. 851, 000 USD – from the energy company, Petroleum Authority of Thailand (PTT). In the 1990s, the Foundation campaigned against a gas pipeline built by PTT through the Huay Kayeng Forest Reserve. By accepting sponsorship from PTT, the Foundation exposed itself to the firm’s influence. It could, in fact, argued that whether or not PTT exercises actual influence over the Foundation’s environmental agenda, the circumstances in which the Foundation finds itself, is enough to damage the NGO’s credibility.

■ *Reduce or eradicate corruption*

In an article in the Jakarta Post by Adisti Sukma Sawitri (2006) titled “For some NGOs, another disaster means new flashy cars,” attention is drawn to the increasing incidence of corruption and embezzlement among local and international NGOs in Indonesia. In the same Newspaper, a UN official is quoted charging that some NGO representatives use hard-earned funds for personal gratification, destroying potentially successful reconstruction projects. For Rafendi Djamin, the Coordinator of Indonesia’s NGO Coalition for International Human Rights Advocacy, international NGOs are more prone to embezzlement because they are ‘untouchable’ under the country’s criminal code (Sawitri, Ibid). To curb this, we suggest that ‘Donor Monitors’ or ‘Independent Network Groups’ with

the power to criminalise should be put in place to deal with corrupt NGOs. Besides criminalising the corrupt NGOs, Donor Monitors could be given the mandate to assess both the local and global impact of particular NGOs' work, evaluate their overall professional quality, and set up ratings before informing the public about the NGOs performances. In the case of Zimbabwe, the National Association of NGOs (NANGO), which is an umbrella organisation of over 1000 NGOs in Zimbabwe, was established in 1962 to strengthen, represent, and coordinate NGO work in Zimbabwe. This was to ensure that the vision and missions of all NGOs in the country were fulfilled in a manner that promote sustainable development of all people, their full realisation of human rights, democracy, good governance and poverty alleviation (see <http://www.nango.org.zw>).

■ *Shun away from imperialists' motives*

Some NGOs, particularly those from the US have tarnished their image due to their close links with and promotion of their imperialist government's interests. In an article in the New Times by Joseph Mudingu (2006), it was revealed that some Western donors, as well as the US, have historically used NGOs to exploit economic opportunities in poor countries or to counter hostile political and religious ideologies. Citing the US-led wars and the ensuing relief efforts in Vietnam, Afghanistan and Iraq, Mudingu argues that some humanitarian aid is not genuine as donor nations use NGOs to provide humanitarian assistance in countries occupied by their troops. In the Vietnam, for example, even as the US dropped bombs creating deaths and massive destruction, it deployed its own NGOs such as Co-operative Assistance for Relief Everywhere (CARE), Catholic Relief Services (CRS), World Vision (WV), International Voluntary Services (IVS), American Red Cross (ARC), Vietnam Christian Services (VCS), and others, to provide relief and rehabilitation to the war victims in Vietnam. The same occurred in Afghanistan and Iraq where

bread and bombs were dropped simultaneously. This, in no doubt, compromises the image of NGOs in question. As Lindsey (2001) puts it, aid that is brought into a conflict environment is seldom neutral as the participation of NGOs will never be detached or separated from the politics at play in a given area. It is only normal, functional and inevitable that NGOs will side with one of the actors in the community.

■ *Discourage overdependence among beneficiaries*

To avoid dependency syndrome amongst communities in developing countries, NGOs should encourage communities in which they find themselves operating to be active participants in both the formulation and implementation of programmes and not to be ‘passive consumers’ of aid provided to them. Mawere and Mubaya (2015) observe that local communities are not only users of public material culture, but experts of their own cultures yet they continue to be disregarded or get minimal regard. For Mawere and Mubaya, looking down upon locals is a phenomenon common and arises from the colonial hangover. The NGOs, in the majority of cases also believe in such superiority and thus look upon locals as ‘mere items’ so to speak at the mercy of the masters – who in this case are the NGO because they own the resources. What most NGOs do not realise is the fact that local communities should be given space as equal players in the development matrix if programmes undertaken should be enduring and overdependence discouraged. Twiqq’s (2004) observation is apt when he says if communities participate in programmes they [communities] are helped to realise and explain their own vulnerabilities and priorities, thus allowing problems to be defined correctly. Such participation ultimately enables communities to tackle their challenges progressively individually and collectively. It is actually believed that once the community takes ownership of the activities and programmes they would jealously guard them so that they endure into the

future thereby ensuring unending survival, a phenomena known as ‘going concern’ in business terms.

■ *Cultivate indigenous forms of livelihoods*

One of the major blunders by most NGOs is that when they come to communities with development projects, they dictate to the communities what has to be done and how. In a study carried out in the southern region of Zimbabwe, it was revealed that some NGOs have a tendency of discouraging to communities to make use of their indigenous epistemologies to improve their farming, but to use those methodologies that the NGOs bring to them (Mawere and Mabeza 2015). Unfortunately, most of the ‘foreign’ methodologies that the NGOs bring to communities are not only expensive but some of them do not fit everywhere, in all contexts. They are context specific yet when brought to communities, the philosophy of one size fits all is applied. Worse still, most of these NGOs fail many communities with their exit strategies. Once the NGO pulls out of the area the trend was that the community immediately pulled off too and the project crumbled. Evidence on the ground suggested that the community would not have been effectively grounded or empowered to continue. Communities would be lacking in skills, knowledge, resources, attitude to continue with the project such that they are left at zero when NGOs contracts terminate, making people who will have been driven away from their indigenous or local forms of livelihoods stranded. No wonder Anderson and Woodrow (1998) argue that NGOs should use the Capacities and Vulnerabilities Analysis (CVA) as a tool to understand communities before they embark on any projects. This tool will help to make relief interventions developmental because it is practical and diagnostic. The basis of the CVA is a simple matrix for viewing people’s vulnerabilities and capacities in three broad interrelated dimensions which are physical/material, social/organisational and motivational/attitudinal. Thus instead of taking communities

off-track, we recommend that when NGOs come with their development projects to communities, they should factor in the locals' forms of knowledge, needs, and indigenous forms of livelihoods. Once this is done, NGOs can now design and implement projects together with locals in a way that sustainably help the latter and foster sustainable development of communities being assisted. This is what is prophesied to have been done by the Jordanian Hashemite Fund for Humanitarian Development (JOHUD), which for almost three decades have attempted to improve the quality of life of community members in Jordan (see Talal 2003).

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, we have tried to show the different perceptions that people have of NGOs, the challenges that NGOs encounter during execution of their work in different communities, how some NGOs betray the people and the general NGO movement, and how the challenges that NGOs encounter could be dealt with. We have, for instance, demonstrated that the participation of NGOs in rural communities, particularly those of developing countries in Africa is very critical and urgent now than ever given that some African governments are failing to address the needs of their populations by themselves. NGOs, thus, now stand as an important leg to the development log matrix. The problem, however, has been the politics surrounding such participation, which is a warning shot that NGOs must ensure that their operations are sanctioned by the local authorities and are within the precincts of their legal framework. This means that NGOs should not endeavour to compete with the efforts of the government to serve the people. In view of this understanding, we have urged that NGOs' operations must be within the four corners of their vision, or mission. The communities must also be actively involved so that there is

collectivity and a sense of ownership in virtually all efforts and programmes driven and supported by the NGOs.

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Chapter 6

Traditional religion, Sacred Places and Sustainability in Africa: The Role and Contribution of Sacred Places in Nigeria

Akiti Glory Alamu

Introduction

From a traditional African perspective, there is the belief in one world of visible and invisible dimensions. This is because a handful of Africans believe that tangible and intangible phenomena dwell in the visible world and act on it but are unseen by humans. Thus, the unity of the environment and the complementarities of its dimensions are no doubt based on African metaphysics. Traditional African people believe that a philosophical inquiry into the fundamental nature of reality is a generic feature exhibited in experience, with the attendant essence of existence and reality (Alamu 2009: 229). As further argued by Alamu (2011: 22), the essence of this existence and reality “is to be acquainted with the unknown within the orbit of the known: to observe the unobservable in the sphere of the observable; and, to see the unseen in the world of the seen.” In point of fact, Africans strongly believe in metaphysical dimension of essence and reality. As a result, they use their African bird’s eye view to observe the unobservable in the realm of the observable and to as well see the unseen in the ‘world of the seen’. Within the ambit of the sacred and the profane, hierophany – sacred appearance seems to connect humans with the Divine. As a matter of fact, the invisible dimension within the visible world constitutes spirits that inhabit sacred places which can be described as metaphysical apparitions of supernatural beings and sacred geography.

Therefore, as essence of existence and reality, contemporary scholars such as Idowu (1991), Awolalu and Dopamu (2005), Magesa (1997), Imasogie (1985), Gaiya (2004) Gyekye (2002) and Ogunbodede and Ikotun (2010) of religious enterprise have engaged themselves in probing into sacred places, esoteric and environmental nature of religion. The sacred and the environmental nature of religion are seen as spiritual resources needed to sustain our existence. More often, we see the physical realms from the spiritual through African metaphysical eye bird's view. Durkheim (1912: 48) and Weber (1958: 59) observe that the most profound values of societal beauty are being connected with the religious institutions. To this end, these profound values of societal beauty as well as the sacred demonstrations serve the schema of understanding religious and practical nature of reality and significance of existence. Consequently, the thrust of this chapter is to explore sacred places within the context of African religion and sustainable environment in Nigeria.

African Traditional Religion: A brief account

Dopamu (2005: 1) asserts that African Traditional Religion (ATR) embraces all aspects of all life. He attests to the fact that Africans do not know how to exist without religion. Religion plays a leading and major role in their lives. According to him, “traditional Africans do not know how to live without religion. They celebrate life religiously and they never embark on anything without bringing in religion” (Dopamu 2005: 1). The foregoing reveals that traditional Africans heretofore Africans are incurably religious hence they bring in the understanding of God and His vicegerents in the theocratic rule of the universe. Africans start off from religion and their lives terminate at the point of religion. Put differently, Africans live and transit with religion. Thus, African understanding of the universe points to the fact that there is one universe that accommodates the

tangible and intangible, sensible and super sensible, material and immaterial.

For traditional Africans, religion is simply life and life is all about religion. This assertion critically supports Kungs' (1993) interpretation of religion thus:

A believing view of life, approaches to life, way of life, and society, humankind and the world, through which a person, though only partially conscious of things and experiences, thinks and feels, acts and suffers, everything. It is a transcendently grounded experience and immanent operative system of co-ordinates by which human beings orient themselves intellectually, emotionally and existentially (p. xvii).

The above means that for Africans, religion is a far more exceeding way of life or an approach to life as directed by a holy writ. It is a way of life and life itself, where there is no dichotomy between religion and human nature and existence.

Gaiya (2004: 32) emphasizes that a study of the beliefs and practices of the African peoples lead to the theological understanding that African Religion is a religion of salvation and wholeness. As a matter of fact, African Traditional Religion is careful in analysing both worldly and spiritual salvation. Africans believe that life is a complex web of relationships that may either promote and preserve life or diminish and destroy it (Gaiya 2004: 33). According to Gaiya (2004: 33):

The goal of religion is therefore, to maintain those relationships that protect and preserve life. For it is the harmony and stability provided by these relationships, both spiritual and materially that create the conditions for well-being and wholeness.

Therefore, the condition for well-being and wholeness depicts religious credential and tonality of African Traditional

Religion. As is the case of Idowu (1996: 128), religion is the keynote and keystone of the people's cultures. No wonder scholars like Hopfe and Woodward (1998: 55) assert that "a basic understanding of African Religions will provide knowledge of customs and attitudes toward the family, society at large, the environment, and death and the life beyond." The above elucidates the essential features of African Traditional Religion, but African Traditional Religion is not many, we only have one African Traditional Religion. It is wrong for Hopfe and Woodward (1998) to think that Africans have many religions. However, it is true that there are varieties and diversity in African beliefs. Dopamu (20006: 18) nevertheless argues that varieties in African Traditional Religion must not be taken to mean a diversity of fundamental beliefs rather he assuringly avers that these varieties are underlying affinities running through them. Corroborating Dopamu's statement Magesa (1997: 17-18) writes:

Varieties in African Religion must not be taken to mean a diversity of fundamental beliefs ... Much has been made of the differences within African Religion based on the distinctive lifestyle of the peoples of Africa. It is not possible to deny that these lifestyles affect the religious symbols of the people. Yet to conclude that there is no internal essential unity in the various expressions ... is to exaggerate ... if we study African Religion in a special place among a special ethnic group, as many scholars have done and still do and, indeed as it is necessary to continue to do it is for the sake of depth and should not be used to support the argument that African Religion is not a generic whole.

African Traditional Religion has actually had sizeable proportion of effect with the incursion of proselytising religions of Islam and Christianity. Gaiya (2004: 35) observes with precision that the arrival of Islam and Christianity in

Africa, the whole scenario of Nigerian perhaps African religious wholeness and experience metamorphosed into series of changes. Thus, the religious structures or institutions that held the African people together into various communities went through drastic form of transitional experience. It is an irrational and inadvertent experience that created and thus creates tension, mutual suspicion among ethnic and religious groups that make up the continent. Through this obvious fact, religious wholeness of the Africans has been tampered with severely. Despite the current trends, many values of African Traditional Religion will continue; the emerging Islam and Christianity in Africa have distinctive African qualities (Gaiya 2004). As long as the religion continues to speak the language of the people, it will survive. Nevertheless, it is not all aspects of human civilization that is negative and condemnable in human environment.

Understanding sacred places

The word 'Sacred' is connected with God, or a god or considered to be holy (Hornby 2000: 1034). Sacred places therefore mean a particular holy site or holy spot, building, temple connected with God or a god. In traditional African belief, sacred places or sacred spots are a matter of course and reality. Idowu (1991: 165-179) the doyen of African Traditional Religion correctly asserts the beliefs in Divinities, spirits and Ancestors as some elements of the religion of the Africans. On their own, Awolalu and Dopamu (2005: 157) categorize these Divinities into triadic departments. Suffice it to say that Awolalu and Dopamu (2005: 158) emphasize Primordial, Deified and Personified divinities. No doubt, the duo argues that in the category of the primordial divinities are pantheon that are said to emanate from the Supreme Being from creation and are saddled with various responsibilities and portfolio. Some of which according to Awolalu and Dopamu (2005: 159) are *Orisa Nla*, (Yoruba sculpture god), *Orunmila* (Yoruba god in

charge of destiny), *Esu* (Yoruba Inspector General of Rituals and Sacrifices), *Olokun* (The Owner or god of the sea) and *Ogun* (god of Iron, smithy and chaste). Under the province of the deified are those who once lived as human beings with spectacular and extra-ordinary feats coupled with powerful and mysterious lives on earth, and after their death, they were canonized. *Sango* (Yoruba god of thunder and lightning), *Sokogba* (Nupe God's axe) and among others are in this category (Awolalu and Dopamu 2005: 157-159).

Lastly in the category, which is our *nitty-gritty* are the personified divinities. Awolalu and Dopamu describe this category of divinities as objects of natural phenomena which inhabit sacred places such as Hills, Grooves, Rock, Forest, Creek, Lagoon, Streams, Sea, Trees and so on. Examples are Oke-Ibadan, Olumo Rock, Osun grooves, Orosun forest, and Akoko creek.²¹ They are all dedicated to the divinities and spirits inhabiting these sacred spots. In fact, these sacred places are actually inhabited by the supersensibles and they remain sacred because people are not allowed to tamper with them. In strong terms, Priests, Priestesses, community leaders, cultic functionaries, guilds of hunters and concerned citizens place taboo in these sacred places since the spirits are said to occupy these areas. This must have formed the background against which *The Forest of God* by Fagunwa was written. Thus, the forest of God is believed to be peopled by supernatural creatures and remained sacred, void of deforestation (Bamgbose 2007: 8).

Sacred places are spots and spatial locations in African Traditional Religion that have special and peculiar attributes from timeless immemorial to the present generation which mark them as somehow extra-ordinary. Usually, sacred places bring about awesome feelings of the mysterious and transcendental power that merits special attention and treatment. A handful of persons could experience the manifestations of the sacred places in different manners as sites of fascination, connectedness, attraction, danger, ordeal,

healing, ritual, meaning, identity, revelation and transformation. Sacred places cut across many natural elements and phenomena that are considered as sacred in many cultures and regions.

Ecologically, these sacred places are regarded as part of the ecosystem right from the pre- historic period to the present. Historical, cultural and spiritual aspects of the ecology of indigenous societies are grounded in the biodiversity, ecosystems and landforms in their habitat. The historical people did not separate the sacred spots from biodiversity and conservation. Consequently, the entire environment becomes holistic to the people and must be conserved. The concept of the sacred was a tool in the hand of the people in antiquity to preserve their environment. The indigenous cosmological views of life in which humans live close to nature and recognized the connectivity and interdependence of all living things have received the attention of scholars. The notion of the sacred creates the impression of an innate idea in the perception of man that it is life-sustaining. Therefore, life-sustaining effects of sacred places have positive effects on ecosystems.

In African religious environment, totem and taboo are synonymous with sacredness. Essentially, these areas dedicated to the divinities, spirits, ghosts and other supersensible entities at times including the animals inhabiting these areas. And where these totemic animals are found in African environment, taboo is associated with them. Thus, Totem means “a person or thing treated with very great or too much respect” (Hornby 2000: 1263). While, Taboo depicts “a cultural and religious custom that forbids people to do, touch, use or talk about a certain thing” (Hornby 2000: 1213). The implication of this is that, where totemic animals are found, such environment is sacred, and no harm will come upon such areas or animals. Consequently, these areas and animals flourish in their environment and again, the supersensibles which inhabit these

areas enjoy the environment and as well the areas are conserved for convenience, and the people are better off for it.

Idowu (1996: 128) opines that certain rocks, trees, plants, lakes, rivers, streams, the heavenly phenomena become to him unmistakable repositories of the presence, which are deliberately marked as sacred spots by community. Thus, these sacred spots discovered by the whole community as a result of common beliefs come into existence. Idowu (1996: 129) further buttresses that:

Social character of worship inevitably results in the putting up of sacred buildings or places to hold such emblems of the divinities as should be kept secret and preserved from the common touch or the weather ... They exist in all places which are traditionally connected with the presence of the divinities, or such places as have been consecrated to them. Therefore, they are found in traditionally sacred forests. There are divinities which people believe should be better worshipped there than in the towns or houses. Several species of trees are regarded as habitual residence of certain spirits; prominent among these are Iroko...and Egungun. While certain sacred trees are more often than not associated with incorporeal, though powerful spirits, there are others which are usually the sacred emblem of certain principal divinities.

It is strongly believed that these sacred spots inhabited by the divinities are central to the wellbeing of the community and more or less part and parcel of domestic life which cannot be ignored.

Again, Idowu (1996: 130) still believes that there are certain sacred grooves connected with spirits of Masquerades, such as *Oro*, *Ogun* and *Egungun* among the Yoruba, *Igue*, *Irepa*, *Uchi*, *Ukpako*, *Okpujoro*, *Ohimiyan*, *Obazu*, *Uda*, *Igbo* and *Otu* among the Edo; *Mnuo* in Igboland and *Adae* among Akan, of which in the main, their cults are secret (Alamu 2006: 52). In these cults,

like every other area, women are excluded while men become members through initiation. Idowu (1996: 130) adds that “usually the simple grove is a clearing in the bush; this holds the shrine, and only the initiates may enter there. Often the sacred emblems are kept in a small mud building into which only the Priest, or the priest with one or two co-officiants usually enters.” Here, it must be mentioned that the sacred place which holds the most sacred emblems is a place forbidden to all except a very few highly privileged people. In fact, Idowu (1996: 130) appositely asserts that large communal groves may have up to three ‘apartments’. The first entrance is an open place, where all and sundry may come. But the second and the third, is a place for the initiates and officiates.

An evaluation

Despite the fact that these environmental features such as rocks, highlands, trees, streams, rivers, waters, forest and among others become abodes of some spirits, they are not in all cases beneficial to their host environment. They are capable of striking fear into the hearts of people. Awolalu (1981: 48-49) observes that trees like *Iroko* (*Chlorophora excels*) are held as sacred and believed to be inhabited by some powerful spirits. People are afraid having the trees close to them because of the fact the spirit makes terrible sounds at interval. The trees cannot be felled unless special rites are performed.

Imasogie (1985: 49-50) opines that these sacred spots inhabited by spirits and divinities become mysterious to men thereby creating fear among them, because they believe that their machinations are impregnated with evil. Often, it is their nature to prowl around in search of prey either because they are hungry or in the service of one’s enemies. In fact, since men live a world pervaded by spirits, ghosts and their human allies, they are constantly exposed to danger (Imasogie 1985: 56).

Traditional religion relies more on soil minerals, flora and fauna resources of the forest, thereby tampering with the

environmental resources. In this setting, traditional ceremonies like festival celebrations, relaxation, and the use of kolanut are all products of the environment, which we often tampered with and which are also capable of promoting unfriendly exploitation of natural resources. Oyeshola (2008: 18-19) avers that other forest products include natural dyes which are used for clothes, body decorations, and for masquerades. In some cultures, all participants in cultural festivals must be adorned (Igho and Otu festivals in Otuo and Irouke, Edo State). Also, in other cases, the clothes worn by priests are also decorated. Therefore, the environment that accommodates all things has become increasingly tenuous, and this has in turn begun to threaten the quality of life, both for human and non-human, on the planet. This environment is threatening the sustainable development and undermining the integrity of fundamental life-support systems that provide emotional and spiritual sustenance as well.

It is also evident to say that the roots of our environmental problem are so largely religious, because from the 20th century till now, Christian missionaries have been chopping down sacred places or groves, which to them are idolatrous, fetish and anti-development. Christians believe that sacred places are alien to Christianity and to the ethos of the West. As a result, the spirit in natural objects, which formerly had protected nature from man, migrated and the old inhibitions to the exploitations of nature crumbled (Schaeffer 1972: 108). However, the remedy must also be essentially religious. On the other hand, in the traditional thought pattern of Western society wherein nature is concerned to be a separate substance- a material-mechanical, and, in a metaphysical sense, irrelevant to man. Whereas, in traditional thought pattern of African society, nature houses both the visible and invisible phenomenon (Schaeffer 1972: 125) Nevertheless, it is not all aspects of human civilization that is negative and condemnable in human environment.

Benefits and relevance of sacred places in Nigeria

In demonstrating the religious benefits of the spirits of masquerades and their sacred spots, Imasogie (1985: 36) opines that it is a veritable demonstration of the Nigerian belief in reality not only of the spiritual realms, but of the unbroken intercourse between man and the spirits. The form in which the worship is conducted bears this out. With some variations in various parts of the country, this worship is usually conducted by the male members of the ethnic groups especially the initiates who constitute themselves into a sort of secret cult for this purpose. Imasogie (1985: 36) again recalls that:

Once a year, at the stated period lasting from seven to fourteen days, the selected members of the cult dress up as masquerades and, accompanied by followers, parade the streets. Among the Yorubas the most representative of the cult of the dead is called Egungun. These Egunguns or masquerades are supposed to be ‘materialized’ spirits of the dead; hence the identity of the men behind the Masks is kept in top secret.

Sequel to the above, the spirits of the masquerades and their sacred spots are essential for religious relics and beauty which give us reason to think of things sacred (Alamu 2007: 106). These religious values are institutions deigned to serve the schema of a religious ceremony celebrated among the people. Some of these religious ceremonies are Osun Oshogbo festival, ritual and cleaning ceremony and Uda festival all in Nigeria.

Buttressing further of the benefits of these spirits as well as their sacred sites, Awolalu (1981: 46) affirms that these spirits are revered principally by those who dwell near rivers, lagoons or the sea, and who believe that the spirits, if suitably provided and cared for, can in return provide man’s needs. He lists out the benefits that may be derived by people if the pride of place

of these riverine and littoral spirits is recognized. According to him, “they control abundance of fish, they prevent the capsizing of canoes and river accidents; some of the spirits supply children to the barren” (Awolalu 1981: 46). From the foregoing, it can be briskly deduced that personified divinities are objects of natural phenomena which inhabit sacred places of the Africa. These sacred places are dedicated solely to them and these areas are highly preserved for their well-being. Meanwhile, we registered the fact that where totem and taboo are found, such environment is sacred both to the supersensibles and animals. Likewise, the environment blossoms, flourishes and remains ever-green. In addition, sacred places inhabited by these divinities, spirits and ghosts become essentialised because of the pride of place occupied by them, coupled with the blessings of the divinities received by the people or community, and the preservation of the environment in which both the sacred and profane as enunciated by Rudoff Ottoh in his *Idea of the Holy* become a meeting point without syncopated rhythms.

As a matter of fact, it is argued that the relevance of the sacred spots was for solution to problems of all kinds within the realm of humanity. The belief is that somewhere beyond the known world; there exists a power that can make right the difficulties that appear so insoluble and intractable here and now. Besides, it has been observed that one common denominator amongst these places is what we might think of as their spiritual Magnetism. That is, the power of the place to attract devotees. This spiritual Magnetism is developed through association with various combinations of miraculous cures, apparitions of supernatural beings, sacred geography and difficulty of access. It is of interest to note that those who visit these sacred places are pilgrims. These pilgrims show their love to God, get near something that is really sacred, and show god their gratitude and loyalty. In fact, a handful of people visited these sacred spots in order to maintain an identity, while others

tried to satisfy the feelings of nostalgia to experience the transcendent or to fulfil the teachings of particular faiths.

No doubt, these historical or sacred sites have spiritual, economic, social and environmental significance. Spiritually speaking, human beings believe that there exists a power that is greater than them which can make right the difficulties that appear so insoluble and intractable here and now. Of a truth, these powers are the resources needed to sustain and maximize our existence so as to have meaning. Economically, people perform pilgrimage either annually or once life time. During this period, the economic activities of the host of the historical or sacred places bloom and bumper harvest is received which contributes to the economic development of the environment. On the social aspect, marital vows are being exchanged, strained relationship is settled during this period and a strong re-union is maintained. Lastly, the environmental significance is imperative because it helps to preserve the environment. This 'eco-ethics' which is regarded as ethics of ecology, has greater respect for the ecosystem right from the pre-historical period to the present. All the aspects of the ecology of indigenous societies are grounded in the biodiversity and ecosystems. Therefore, sacred spots did not separate themselves from biodiversity, conservation and preservation.

Environmental sustainability: A conceptual meaning

The concept of the environment can be traced to the evolution and growth of geography as a discipline. In the early geographical research, concern was primarily on recognising the laws of nature. Therefore, environment was studied with open eyes, seeking as objectively as possible to identify the forces that governed the formation of landscape, coastlines and general phenomena, apparently, a more pronounced view was taken of human activity – the relationships between nature and man were considered to be primary interest, particularly in early geographic writing even up to the present time

(Ogunbodede and Ikotun 2010: 257). In the same vein, Ogunbodede and Ikotun (2010: 258) posit that “our environment has been veritable sources of creativity, innovation, imagination, abstraction, and intuition of human existence cum development.” From inception of discovery, Nigerian environment includes all dominated by evergreen or deciduous trees with a canopy cover of greater than 60% and a height exceeding two metres and the leaves of trees were once in the heart of the tropical rainforest.

Ron Elsdon (1973: 9) sees the environment as a natural preservation within us because we have treated the earth, which is responding through, not upsetting ecological resources, and subsequently avoiding the impending exhaustion of some vital physical resources. Man must interact with his surroundings and natural habitat such as animals, the plants, the trees, the air and urban world so as to keep his environment secured and intact. Schaeffer (1972: 98) comments that ever since man became a numerous species he has affected his environment notably. People, then, have often been a dynamic element in their own environment, but in the present state of historical scholarship we usually do not know exactly when, where, or with what effects man-induced changes came. As we entered the last third of the 20th century, however, concern for the problem of ecological backlash was mounting feverishly.

Therefore, environmental sustainability as a concept is a notion around which legally significant expectations³⁹ regarding environmental conduct have begun to crystallize (Oyeshola 2008: 17). Citing Lele (2004) as quoted by Oyeshola (2008: 160) environmental sustainability is “a new way of life and approach to social and economic activities for all societies, rich and poor which is compatible with the conservation of the environment.” In fact, Pearce and Watford (1993: 8) correctly and assertively demonstrate environmental aspect in sustainable development in the following paradigm:

Sustainable development describes a process which the natural resource base is not allowed to deteriorate. It emphasizes the hitherto unappreciated role of the environmental quality and environmental inputs in the process of raising real income and quality of life.

Following from the above, Oyeshola (2008: 162) argues that sustainable development has three fangs, which are economic, political, social and environment. An economically sustainable system must be able to produce goods and services on a continuing basis and maintain manageable economy without truncating sectoral balances of economic activities of the country (Oyeshola 2008: 162). Environmentally, sustainable system must maintain a stable resource base, while avoiding over-exploitation of renewable resource systems or environmental sink functions and depleting non-renewable resources only to the extent that investment is made in adequate substitutes. This involves maintenance of biodiversity, atmospheric stability and other ecosystem functions not ordinarily classified as economic resources (Oyeshola 2008: 162). The last factor must of necessity attain distributional equity, adequate provision of social services including health and education, gender equity, political accountability, transparency and participation. This must be with the understanding of human rights on healthy environment and sustainable development (Oyeshola 2008: 162).

Environmental organizations such as conservation bodies, friends of the earth, neighbourhood associations and various levels of government should be integrated in the course of sustaining environmental development. And since environmental sustainability revolves around legal expectation as earlier stated by Oyeshola (2008), it becomes important that this legal process should be enacted by the government, which must produce laws to protect the environment from abuse and exploitation and to restrain greed, arrogance and ignorance in

man's dealing with nature. Ron Elsdon (1973: 146) further comments that:

Such laws would deal with the problems of resource depletion, pollution and the like in ways whose combined cumulative effect would be to move society gradually along the road to a new order [...] creating reclamation and recycling activities of considerable magnitude. Such a tax would also place a higher value on thrift and durability, a lower one on rapid obsolescence [...]. The possibilities for imaginative and enlightened government are endless; and while we probably cannot know in advance which ideas will work well, surely such creative experimentation is worth our best public efforts.

Sacred places and sustainable environment in Nigeria: A symbiosis

Ogunbodede and Ikotun (2010: 259) argue that environmental features such as hills, mountains, rivers, plants, animals, and forests are a matter of cosmic necessity for religious activity and development in the universe. As a matter of fact, these environmental features are often seen as sacred spots or places accommodating and preserving the gods or spirits. And such an environment becomes sacred for objects or animals. To buttress the sacredness of these environmental features further Ogunbodede and Ikotun (2010: 259) again demonstrate that:

More importantly, that practical demonstration of environmental impacts on religious development can be observed and established from different dimensions of worshipping on and of hills/mountains, worshipping besides and or inside rivers, or water bodies, as well as worshipping in the forests and other environmental features. These are more pronounced in the traditional or

African belief system as these features are often used as places to commune with the god in worship/prayer.

Of course, indigenous or traditional religion embraces environmental features as means to an end, and not ends in themselves. These environmental features listed earlier are used to determine suitable places and sustainability.

It is vital to note that these environmental features which are couched in sacred spots are catalysts for sustainable environmental development. It is evident that hardly would a fire engulf these areas, because people and the community are mindful of their safety. Today, no doubt, Osun groves still remain evergreen; a place you see various animals playing and moving freely without the fear of the unknown. For the water or stream, the fishes remain golden and totemic because nobody tampers with them, rather the people watch closely against miscreants who would want to bring calamity to the community by killing any of these totemic animals. Apart from the people, the priests, priestesses, community leaders, other cultic functionaries, and guilds of hunters corporately guide against any fire outbreak in order not to incur the wrath of the gods and other setbacks.

Masquerades in these sacred groves are also preserved. The initiates keep vigil while the non-initiates guide the groves against fire outbreak, deforestation and degradation. As a result of certain taboos associated with them, and calamity that awaits the defaulters people ensure adequate protection of these sacred places. People hardly destroy the trees, the inhabitants and among others. In timeless beginning, every tree, every spring, every stream, every hill had its own *genius loci*, its guardian spirit. These spirits were accessible to men and would constantly show their ambivalence. But before a man could cut a tree, mine a mountain, or dam a brook, it was important to placate the spirit in charge of that particular situation. Evidently, these sacred spots are distinguished by their environmental nourishment and flourishing because their trees

are evergreen and preserved and the environment is protected, preserved, sustained and maintained by the community and other stakeholders. Even today, these sacred spots attract tourist centres and historical sites which are of benefits to the host community and government in terms of revenue generation.

Conclusion

This chapter has x-rayed sacred places in African religion and sustainable environment in Nigeria. It has shown that in traditional African society, some environmental features like hills, rocks, mountains, forests, grooves, trees, seas, plants, lakes, lagoon, and among others remain sacred for the habitations of divinities, spirits and ghosts. As a result of these sacred spots, the entire environment is conserved, sustained, flourished and bloomed. It is praiseworthy to say that this entire environment is not deforested, degraded or tampered with. No doubt, it is noteworthy that today, these sacred centres as a result of their peculiarity become tourist centres and historical sites that even generate revenue for the host community in particular and government in general. This is in consonance with the geography of African Traditional religion. In other words, the environment determines spiritual sustenance through man-environment friendly relations. It is, therefore, the submission of this chapter that environmental features where sacred places are found play significant roles in entrenching sustainable environment and religious sustenance in contemporary Nigeria.

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Chapter 7

The Role of Indigenous Religion in Fostering Social Stability and National Development: Lessons from *Ifá* of Nigeria

Hezekiah Olufemi Adeosun

Introduction

Nigeria, today, is faced with a plethora of challenges among which is religious rivalry between the two imported religious faiths, namely Christianity and Islam. This ugly development affects the entire aspects of her endeavours, namely; economic, social, political and environmental. This chapter aims at examining the relevance of *Ifá*, a Yorùbá indigenous religion, towards addressing a mirage of problems confronting the Nation as a result of unhealthy rivalry between the two foreign religions. The basic traditional worship of the Yoruba is *Ifá*, it is known as the Yorùbá god of wisdom. *Ifá* philosophy is one of the oldest forms of knowledge revealed to mankind. It encompasses the revelations, way of life and religion taught by *Ọ̀rúnmìlà*, who was the Creator's own witness when the creation of all other organic and inorganic substances was undertaken. The method adopted in this chapter is descriptive, using some verses in *Ifá* corpus in Yẹ́mí Èlẹ́bùibọ́n's *Ifá: The Custodian of Destiny*, as data to substantiate claims on the effectiveness of indigenous religion in building a virile Nation. The chapter reveals among other things that indigenous religious system, as exemplified in *Ifá*, enhances social stability and national development. It, therefore, notes that unless the people of Nigeria go back to their root and practice the ethos of their indigenous religion as prescribed, peace and stability may continue to elude the society.

Ifá is a principal divinity in Yorùbá religion, culture and belief systems. It is the repository of all wisdom and the controller of life and death. This is reflected in his description as *Akéré finú sọgbọ̀n, akọ ẹran tí sòkú alẹ àná dààyè. Èlà Ìsodè, tí kọ̀mọ ẹ̀ràn bí iyèkan ẹ̀ni* (The tiny embodiment of wisdom, the wizard who turns the corpse of yesternight into a living being. The Èlà of Ìsodè, one who teaches one wisely like one's kinsman) (Ẹlẹbuibọ̀n, 2004: vii). This description foregrounds the greatness of this all-important key divinity among the Yorùbá. He is the mouth-piece of all other divinities. *Ifá* represents the repository of all information concerning the language, culture and belief system of the Yorùbá as a people. According to Ẹlẹbuibọ̀n (2004: vii), the scope of *Ifá* literary corpus is so encompassing that it entails details about all the socio-cultural peculiarities of the Yorùbá people. Yorùbá thought-system, as remarked by Akintola (1999: 1), is evidently a product of the culture and natural environment of the ethnic group identified as Yorùbá. It is not disputable, as far as Yorùbá thought-system is concerned, to say or admit that the wisdom or philosophy of *Ọ̀rúnmìlà*, the Yorùbá god of wisdom, is the all-embracing fountain from which Yorùbá thought-system derives. *Ifá* is the living foundation of Yorùbá culture. Abimbólá (1976: 3) declares that *Ifá* and *Ọ̀rúnmìlà* refer to the same deity. While the name *Ọ̀rúnmìlà* refers exclusively to the deity himself, the name *Ifá* refers both to the deity and his divination system. This position is corroborated by Bascom (1941) as quoted in Abimbólá (1976: 3) when he says "the word *Ifá* is used to mean both the system of divination and the deity who controls it; and this deity is known also as *Ọ̀rúnmìlà*". Ajayi (2002: 2) explains that the Yorùbá oral tradition emphasises the part played by *Ọ̀rúnmìlà* in guiding the destiny of man and *Òrìṣà*. One reason given for his intimate knowledge of matters affecting man's destiny is that *Ọ̀rúnmìlà* is present when man is being created by God. Therefore, he knows all the secrets of human beings and the *Òrìṣà* and thus he can reveal what has been destined for and if the destiny is an unfortunate

one, *Ọ́rúnmìlà* can prescribe remedies to avert the misfortune. This is why *Ọ́rúnmìlà* is described as *Ẹ̀lẹ̀rù-ìpín* (the witness of destiny or lot), *Òbìrìkátí A-pa-ojo-ikú-dà* (the great one who alters the date of death). Àṣáwálé (2011: 3) notes that the basic traditional worship of Yorùbá people in general is *Ifá*, and that all the other divinities as *Ṣàngó*, *Ọ̀gún*, *Ọṣun* and others, still pay abeyance to *Ifá* and consult him on matters of importance. Abimbólá (1976: 9) posits that “*Ifá* is the only active mouthpiece of Yorùbá traditional religion taken as a whole. As a mouthpiece, *Ifá* serves to popularise the other Yorùbá gods, he serves to immortalise them. With his great wisdom, knowledge and understanding, *Ifá* co-ordinates the work of all the gods in the Yorùbá pantheon”. He serves as a ‘middleman’ between the other gods and the people on one hand, and between the people and their ancestors on the other hand. He is the mouthpiece and the public relations officer of all the other Yorùbá gods. Akintola (1999: 2) is of the opinion that “the revealed wisdom or *Ifá* philosophy was first revealed by God, as Supreme Creative Energy, to *Ọ́rúnmìlà*, who in turn reveals it to mankind, through his priests on earth, whom he had initiated into the secrets of this primordial and all-embracing wisdom, or body of knowledge”. Akintola submits that *Ifá* as oral literature of the Yorùbá, falls into the category of “Wisdom Literature,” a category into which fall certain canonical books of the Hebrews as the Biblical Books of Samuel, Kings, Proverbs, some of the Psalms, Job and Ecclesiastes; and other non-canonical books. Abimbólá (1976: vi) also asserts that *Ifá* literature is perhaps the most accomplished product of Yorùbá traditional culture. “*Ifá* is indeed the Yorùbá traditional body of knowledge embodying the deep wisdom of our forebears. It is a complete system by itself in which all the Yorùbá consider valuable to them throughout the whole range of their experience from the very ancient times can always be found”. Abimbólá notes further that no one who has studied *Ifá* in detail will fail to see the fact that the peoples of traditional African societies were not as

ignorant as we have often been told. He posits that the peoples of traditional Africa were largely illiterates, but they were no fools. Among them were elite classes such as the *babaláwo* who have preserved all the ingredients of their own culture in an almost completely oral form but in such a way that knowledge is codified and transmitted orally with care, patience and perseverance. Dopamu (1988: 63) posits that “*Ifá* has no aversion to members of other faiths, its main pre-occupation is the unity and peaceful co-existence of all people in the society. This inter-faith solidarity is further seen in the fact that even when the other religions over-ried the patience of Afrel by destroying what was sacred to it, it still allowed converts to be made within its fold and it encouraged the establishment of mosques and churches within its environment”. Thus, this chapter examines the role of *Ifá* religion among the Yorùbá of Nigeria in fostering social stability and national development.

Origin of Islam and Christianity in Nigeria

Before the advent of Islam and Christianity into the various indigenous communities that eventually became Nigeria, the various peoples had evolved what is generally referred to as African Religion (AFREL). The belief systems that constitute African religion, which emerged from intimate blending of existential realities in different culture areas, were relevant to the lifestyles and experiences of the inhabitants as an instrument for coping with the complexities of human existence in a largely agrarian setting. Essential to African religion is belief in the existence of a Supreme Being or Force, a pantheon of divinities, sacrifices, rituals and festivities for propitiating the supernatural beings. Anele (2013: 1) declares that in virtually every community, each version of (AFREL) has no recognised founder; but there is a priestly class with the responsibility of ensuring that members of the community lived according to stipulations of the religion in each area. The fundamental doctrines and injunctions of (AFREL) were not

embodied in a purported revealed holy book. Rather, they exist as a living and lived reality in the minds and hearts of indigenous peoples, being an integral component of their culture, customs, and lifestyles. The degree of tolerance and pragmatism in African religion is remarkable.

As time went on, widespread acceptance of Islam and Christianity caused marginalisation of indigenous religions, to the extent that the threat of extinction in future is a real possibility. African religions have been variously described as animism, fetishism, juju, or paganism. Thus, the success of Christianity and Islam in Nigeria, could only have been possible because a fertile ground of religious faith was already in place. One of the most significant events in the history of Nigeria was the spread of Islam. Balogun (2000: 211) has stated that Islam could have already reached Kanem-Bornu (now spelt Borno) during the early decades of the religion in the 7th Century AD. However, the more acceptable date of the coming of Islam in Kanem-Borno was in the 11th Century when Humai, son of Selemma, is said to have reigned as the first Muslim ruler in Kanem-Borno. The Kanem-Borno Empire, as is well known, includes some parts of the present day Northern Nigeria. By the middle of 17th Century, some Islamic influence had reached Nupe in the present day Niger State of Nigeria. From Nupe, some members of Islamic cleric, known as *ulama* moved further south into Yorùbáland about 17th and 18th Centuries (Balogun, 2000: 218-219). It is also claimed that apart from Nupe Islamic influence into Yorubaland also came directly from Borno. By the middle of the 17th Century, a Muslim community had existed in Ọyọ. By 18th Century, Islam had spread not only to Ọyọ but also to Ìgbóho, Kìsí, Ìsẹyìn, Ìkòyí, Ògbómọṣọ, Òwu, Ìjana, Kétu and Baagri (Balogun, 2000: 218-219). Balogun explains further that before the end of 18th Century, the Yorùbá were not only receiving the Islamic religion, they were also exporting it to Dahomey. This is notwithstanding the fact that the Yorùbá converts to Islam at the time were still in minority vis-à-vis the

followers of traditional religion. That was the situation up to the end of the 18th Century, when a group of Muslim scholars led by Uthman dan Fodio led the famous jihad in order to reform Islamic practices in Northern Nigeria.

The first attempt to bring Christianity to Nigeria dates back to the 16th and 17th centuries. As at that period, Portugal had established trade relations with the Kingdoms of Benin and Warri. At the request of the Oba of Benin, Portuguese Catholic Missionaries came to evangelise in the Kingdom. The first batch of the missionaries arrived Benin in August 1515 but the Oba was away, fighting the Idah War (Ajayi, 1965: 2). A year later, the Oba returned and allowed one of his sons and others of his chiefs to be baptised and taught to read. However, the Oba was more preoccupied with wars than learning about Christianity. The efforts of the Spanish missionaries who had come after the failure of the Portuguese also were ineffective. The strategy of the missionaries to concentrate on converting the Oba so that his subjects would follow suit could not work. This was also the same story with regard to Warri within the same period. In the latter case, however, the Olu allowed his crown prince to be baptised and educated. The prince later sent one of his sons to Portugal to be educated and he later returned with a Portuguese wife (Ajayi, 1965: 3). This development could have led the foundation of Christianity in Warri and perhaps to other parts of Nigeria, but it did not. The evangelisation was confined to the palace of the Olu. Despite the existence of Christian presence in Warri for one and half centuries, 1570-1733, Christianity was later completely overwhelmed by African religion. Thus, by the beginning of the 19th Century there were only a few relics to show that Christianity ever came to Warri. These included “the huge cross in the centre of the old Warri and a few church decorations surviving among the traditional shrines” (Ajayi, 1965: 3). The success story of the coming of Christianity to Nigeria, according to Ajayi (1965: 31-32), was the second phase in the 19th Century and this time around the port of call was

Badagry. In this place, the Methodist missionaries led the way. Rev. Thomas Birch Freeman was the leading Methodist missionary. He arrived in Badagry in September 1842 and was followed shortly by Henry Townsend, a lay missionary of the Church Missionary Society (CMS). Four years later, Presbyterian and Baptist missionaries also arrived to join in the evangelisation of Nigeria (Ajayi, 1965: 31-32).

Ajayi (1965: 25-52) notes that for the history of the origin of Christianity in Nigeria, the role played by the freed African slaves takes a central place. The liberated African slaves, many of whom were from Nigeria, were brought back to Sierra Leone where they were educated and converted to Christianity. Many of them later returned to Nigeria and became pioneer Christians and missionaries in Nigeria. A leading figure among the liberated African missionaries was Bishop Samuel Ajayi Crowther of the Anglican Church. He was the first African Anglican Bishop, born in Oshogun, in the present day Oyo State. He was captured and sold to the Portuguese slave traders. However, before they sailed, the ship was captured by the British Navy and Ajayi was taken to Freetown, Sierra Leone. Having been freed in Freetown, the CMS took him and educated and he served as interpreter to the Niger Expedition of 1841. He was ordained in England in 1843 and sent back to Sierra Leone to prepare for a mission to Abeokuta by beginning to conduct services in Yoruba language. In 1846, Bishop Ajayi, accompanied by Rev. Henry Townsend and others worked to consolidate the CMS mission in Abeokuta. Then in 1857 Rev. Ajayi led the CMS Niger Mission to Onitsha and environs to evangelise the area (Ajayi, 1965: 33). Since then, Christianity has begun to spread throughout Nigeria. The next section in this chapter will review briefly the history of religious crises in Nigeria, basically between Islam and Christianity.

A brief review of religious crises in Nigeria

Islam and Christianity are the proselytizing religions which had been imported to Nigeria and at the same time struggle for membership. Thus, this membership drive at times lends credence to mutual suspicion. Nigeria is a pluralistic and multi-religious nation without any particular religion being a state religion. There is no gainsaying the fact that Nigeria is a country of diverse cultures, traditions and faiths. But of all the diverse elements, religion has proved to be most sensitive and the one that has often led to conflicts and divisions (Dopamu cited in Alamu, 2010: 98-99). Going by the available statistics, Alamu (2010: 103) enumerates the cases of religious violence bound in Nigeria. These include the tension created over Shariah (Islamic Law) issue in the late 1970, the religious (Maitatsine) disturbance in Kano (1977; 1979; 1980) and the various crises in Zaria (1981), Maiduguri (1982), Kaduna (1982), Kano (1982) and Yola and Gombe (1984). Religious disturbances in Saki (Oyo State) and Ilorin (Easter 1986), the OIC controversy (1986), the carnage in parts of Kaduna and Kano (1987), the 1988 religious crisis in Kaduna Polytechnic are gory instances. Other examples are the Bauchi religious crisis of (1991), Kaduna crisis of 2001, Jos religious crisis of 2001. The religious violence sparked off by a purported blasphemous article on Prophet Mohammed (PBOH) brought violent bloodletting in Kano and Abuja in 2003. Also, the September 11, 2001 terror attacks in faraway United States of America was marked in Kano with arson and bestial killings of non-indigenes, mostly Christians from other parts of Nigeria. The University of Ibadan students saga of 1996, Lagos fiasco of 1998, Owerri uprising of 1996, Sagamu crisis of 2001, Aba reprisal killings of 2001 and Boko Haram insurgency in some parts of Northern States of Nigeria since 2009 till date resulted to the most commanding bloodbath in recent times.

On the contrary, however, indigenous religion is not a proselytising religion nor does it guzzle for members, rather it

is tolerant, it accommodates and remains autochthonous. It is in this light that this chapter looks into ways *Ifá*, a Yorùbá indigenous religion, addresses societal problems through its doctrines and teachings.

Towards a peaceful society: Lessons from *Ifá*

The history of *Ifá* religion among the Yorùbá is as old as the ethnic group herself. It is a religion handed down orally from one generation to another. It is the Yorùbá god of wisdom. It is this great wisdom which gives him a high position among the other Yorùbá gods. This section examines the various teachings of *Ifá* in promoting peace and harmony in the society. The data used in this chapter were carefully selected from the compilation of *Ifá* verses in Yẹmí Èlẹbùibọn's *Ifá: The Custodian of Destiny* (2004). Issues discussed in the analysis include hospitality/kindness, avoidance of wickedness, honesty /integrity, impartiality, and tolerance.

***Hospitality/kindness:** One of the virtues appreciated by the Yorùbá in identifying one as a good person is hospitality/kindness. This virtue is expressed in *Ògúndádí* corpus which reads:

Agbọn-Ọngbọn-Ọn ojúgun
A dífá fún Ọjá tíí ẹ Yẹyé Àró
Bí ò bá sí Ọjá tíí ẹ Yẹyé Àró
Bí a ò bá tí ẹ apá Àró ẹẹbọ nìyí o
Ọjá; inú rere dùn ún ẹ, Ọjá
Bí ò bá sí Ọlọja tíí ẹ Yẹyé Àró
Bí a ò bá tí ẹ itan Àró ẹẹbọ nìyí o
Ọjá; inú rere dùn ún ẹ, Ọjá.

(The straight-forwardness legs

Dilapidated walls are rugged at the back

Ifá divination was performed for Ọjá (sash) the mother of Àró

This is how Àró's arm would have been offered as sacrifice
Ọjá; it is always good to show kindness
But for Ọjá the mother of Àró

This is how Àró's thigh would have been offered as
sacrifice; Ọjá) (p. 126).

This excerpt explains a time when *Ọrúnmìlà* embarked on divination trip to a town and was accommodated in a chief's house called *Àró*. All the household of *Àró* did not recognise *Ọrúnmìlà* including *Àró* himself. As a result, he was merely offered accommodation, no food nor water was given to him. This they regretted and paid dearly for later. *Ọrúnmìlà* had been in the town for upwards of five years when a particular incident happened. The eldest prince of the king's town was sick. All the traditional physicians in the town had tried their best in vain. At last, the prince died. They were then confronted with the problem of how to resurrect him. It was this time that someone suggested the name of a guest in *Àró*'s house. He said he suspected that the man was a strong man in terms of herbal medicine. Immediately, *Ọrúnmìlà* was summoned to the palace. When he got there, he consulted his *Ifá* and rehearsed the corpus that emerged. Moreover, *Ọrúnmìlà* told the king that if he needed his prince alive he should offer the *Àró* of the town as sacrifice. Following *Ọrúnmìlà*'s explanation and advice, the king thanked him and promised to send for him later when the prescribed items were ready. Immediately after *Ọrúnmìlà*'s departure, the king sent his emissaries to the town to look for *Àró* wherever he could be got and be brought to the palace. The directive was carried out with dispatch. *Àró* was picked and was tied-up ready to be offered as sacrifice.

However, someone had gone secretly to inform *Àró*'s mother of the death looming over her son. Immediately she heard of this, the woman dressed up and made for *Ọrúnmìlà*'s apartment. She appealed to him passionately. Already, she had been briefed about ill-treatment meted to *Ọrúnmìlà* in the household of *Àró* all this while. She appealed that *Àró* be

forgiven on her behalf. When *Orúnmìlà* could no longer contain the weight and intensity of *Àró's* mother appeal, he told her to return home; promising that her son would escape death. A little while after, a servant from the palace came to inform *Orúnmìlà* that his attention was needed in the palace and that the materials for the sacrifice had been got ready. When *Orúnmìlà* got there, he asked them to bring out the sacrificial items. *Àró* was therefore brought. Immediately *Orúnmìlà* saw *Àró*, he denied he ever told them to look for him. He said it was *Àróko* (he goat) that was mentioned. Those that were there in the first instance suspected that it might be a misconstrued information on their own part. They, therefore, provided a goat as substitute instantly, the prince got up hail and hearty after the offer of sacrifice.

It is observed from the corpus that if not for *Àró's* mother, *Àró* would have been killed. The lesson learnt from the corpus is that strangers should not be looked upon with disdain, they should be treated with good care. The corpus is also relevant in the present day Nigeria where peoples of different ethnics and tribes live together as a Nation. Living with peace and love is hereby emphasised in this *Ifá* corpus irrespective of where one hails from.

*Avoidance of wickedness: Goodwill is one of the virtues approved by the Yorùbá. To them, nursing ill-will towards one's fellow human being is unethical. This virtue is foregrounded in *Ogbèsá* corpus as this:

Abínú ẹni nùí gbé tẹni jù sínú ibú
Èyàń tí ò bínú ẹni
A sè gbé tẹni jù sókìtì ẹfọn
A dífá fún Bóri ẹni ò paní
Èyí tíí ẹ ààyò Alákòókó
Njẹ bẹrú n gbáẹ bọ,
Bí ẹrú n kọrin
Ó ní ohun tí ẹrú rí.

(The wicked mischievously throws one's
 fortune into the deep sea
 The less mischievous
 Could throw one's fortune to the forest hill
 Ifá divination was performed for Bórí-ẹni-ò-pani
 The favourite of Alákòókó
 Behold the slave while sweeping
 And he is singing
 He has secret experience inside him) p.130.

The narrative in the corpus tells the story of a town known as *Àkókó* in the distant past. The traditional chieftaincy title of the king of the town was *Alákòókó*. This king had many wives as it was customary for all other Yorùbà kings. Among these wives was a particular favourite one known as *Bórí-ẹni-ò-pani* (if one is spared by one's luck). The implication of her being chosen as the favourite was that she should be the one to be directly saddled with the responsibilities of preparing the king's food and not only that, she would know all the secrets pertaining to the king more than anyone else. What qualified her for this exalted position was not only her exquisite beauty but also the type of amiable character she often demonstrated. This is in agreement with the traditional philosophy of placing high premium on human character. However, this favourite's office, position and character engendered rivalry and hatred among the co-wives. One significant tradition of this town was to celebrate annual *Ifá* festival. During this festival, the king would put a special crown on his head. After this crown was put off, it would be kept in the exclusive custody of his favourite wife till the following year when another annual festival was about to hold. In a particular year, however, this favourite wife took custody of the special crown as usual. But her colleagues in the palace stole it and threw it into a flowing river.

When it remained just about five days to celebrate yet another festival, the woman thought of getting prepared for the

occasion, so she went to where the special crown was kept. She felt disturbed to note that the crown was no more at the place it was kept. When she could not find solution to her problem, she went to her *Ifá* priest for consultation. The priest consulted with *Ifá* and discovered that something significant had got lost from her, and that the thing was in the deep bottom of the river. She was however prescribed some sacrifice after which she was assured of recovering her belonging. She was asked to buy a big fish to propitiate the inner-head of her husband. It was that very day she offered the sacrifice as prescribed. The second day after the offering of the sacrifice, she went to the market to buy fresh fish for soup. When she got to the market, she found one extra big fish but the money she had on her was not enough to buy it so she rushed back home to bring more money. All this while, the other wives were just making jest of her with the expectation that her days were numbered. When she eventually brought the fish home, she dissected it and was greatly amazed to discover that the special crown had been swallowed by the fish she had just bought.

Early in the morning of the festival, they had all prepared for the great expectations to happen. After the necessary rituals in the inner room and when it remained the ceremonial aspect of the crowning ceremony, these women led the way and choruses “come and remove this crown and replace it with the special one”. To the surprise of her detractors, *Bóri-ẹni-ò-pani* emerged with the special crown. This was greeted with both astonishment and disappointment on the part of the detractors wife and admiration on the part of the public. The co-wives became downcast and were permanently put to shame and ignominy. As from then on, it became a parlance that if one is not destined to die, no one can kill one. Thus, from this *Ifá* corpus, it is established that wickedness to one’s fellow human being in homes, places of work, and in the society is condemnable.

*Honesty/Integrity: The Yorùbá believe that an honest person is regarded as a victor. From infancy, the child is trained

to imbibe the culture of honesty in everything he/she does. This philosophy is enshrined in one of the *Odus* (corpus) called *Ìdin-Ìlẹkẹ* which states:

Panpẹ awo adeḡboro pẹ
Sọkùnrùndìgbà awo òkè Ìjerò
Ọrun mịjà ọkọ nù Ẹawo Ọrun sekin
Àwọn mẹteṣeta nù ẹ ọmọ Ìkọfá ilé Olódùmarè
Ifá kọ wọn ní didá ọwọ
Wọn mọ ọn dá
Ó kọ wọn lójuntẹ alẹ
Wọn mọ ọn tẹ
Ó kọ wọn lónkara ẹbọ
Wọn mọ ọn ha
(Panpẹ, the priest of Adeḡboro pẹ

Sọkùnrùndìgbà, the priest of Ìjerò-city
Ọrun mịjà ọkọ is the priest of Ọrún sekin
The three being the apprentices of Ọrúnmìlà
Ifá taught them how to conduct consultation
They mastered it well
He taught them how to make divination signatures
They mastered it
He taught them the sacrificial intricacies
They mastered it well) (p.61).

This piece talks about the three *Ifá* priests started learning the profession of *Ifá* priesthood at the same time. In the process, *Ọrúnmìlà* taught them how to handle the *Ikin* (consecrated divination palm kernel), how to cast the *ọpẹlẹ* (divination chains) and how to prepare and offer sacrifices. After that, *Ọrúnmìlà* laid down the rules and regulations associated with the profession. These included abstinence from adultery and fornication. He told them that if they did this, they would not have peace of mind and the oracle of *Ifá* would cease to reveal himself to them. This would not allow them to

be successful in life, and as such, they would have nothing to show for their trainings and subsequent undertakings. These principles confirm the sanctity of *Ifá* as a religion among the Yorùbá which its adherents comply with.

One day *Ọrúnmìlà* embarked on a visit to *Olódùmarè*. He directed his apprentices to take care of the house on his behalf and abide by his ethics and tenets. Hardly had *Ọrúnmìlà* left than his apprentices started misbehaving and perpetrating different atrocities. He consulted the oracle from *Òde-Ọrun*, and saw all what his apprentices were doing. He then decided to give them test. *Ọrunmila* thus mandated a beautiful lady with beads on her buttocks and who paraded a charming beauty to visit each of them. She was asked to tell each of them that she would like them to consult *Ifá* oracle for her. Since this lady was already aware of the reason why she was being sent, she got money from *Ọrunmila*, her father, and descended into the earth. When the lady got to the *Ifá* priests of *Panpẹ* and *Şòkùnrunđìgbà* to consult *Ifá* on her behalf, they both proposed to marry her. The lady tongue-lashed them and told them that the actions of priests of their calibre were responsible for the decadence of the society. She then moved on to the third priest - *Ọrúnmìyà ọkọ*: the priest of *ọrun şekin*. The appearance of this latter priest to the lady signalled to her that the apprentice was totally unlike his colleagues. He did not show any sign of fornication. After consulting for her, he told her that she had no sacrifice to offer except that he should take good care of her. So, the priest entertained her and accorded her befitting reception. This lady felt very happy and satisfied. Later, she returned to her father.

After some days, *Ọrunmila* came back to the earth and brought this lady along. He, on arrival, sent for all his apprentices and told them all they had done while he was away. He told them that he was all this while monitoring their activities. He then handed the lady over to the third apprentice, *Ọrúnmìyà ọkọ*; the priest of *ọrun şekin*. He proclaimed her his wife as he was the only one that acted honestly and respected

the ethics of their profession. From that day on, it became an abomination and taboo for true *Ifá* priest to allow himself to be infatuated by the beauty of his client.

Going by this account of *Ìdin-Ìlẹ̀kẹ* corpus, one could situate the incident with the happenings in most religious places in Nigeria today. There are cases of Imams and Pastors having secret affairs with some of the women members of their congregations, ignoring the commandment of God against adultery and fornication. These categories of Imams and Pastors are nothing but *Panpẹ awo Adeghoro pẹ* and *Ṣọkànrùndìgbà awo Òkè-Ìjerò* in *Ìdin-Ìlẹ̀kẹ* corpus, who are supposed to put sanity into the fabric of the society but are found committing all sorts of atrocities. However, those that truly practice the tenets and ethics of their religion, be it Islam, Christianity or African Religion (AFREL) are as good as *Ọrúnmijà ọkọ*.

*Impartiality: *Òtúrà-Rẹtẹ* corpus points to the fact that balance must be made when one is adjudicating over a matter between two parties involved. The corpus is put succinctly thus:

Òjò pátápátá ní boṣe olẹ
A dífá fún Ọrúnmilà
Èyí tí Akápò ó pè lejọ nílẹ Olódùmarè
Òjò pátápátá ní boṣe olẹ
A dífá fún Ọrúnmilà
N lọ rẹẹ jejọ Akápò nílẹ Olódùmarè.

(Heavy downpour provides a cover for the bugler

Ifá divination was performed for Ọrúnmilà

When Akápò instituted legal action against him at

Olódùmarè's court-yard

Heavy downpour provides cover for the bugler

Ifá divination was performed for Ọrúnmilà

Who was going to defend himself on the accusation levied by Akápò at Olódùmarè's court-yard (p.57).

In the olden days, there was a man called *Akápò* who usually bore *Ọrúnmilà*'s divination sack along with him. He followed diligently all the rules and methodology of *Ọrúnmilà* to the last extent. He was a true devotee. When he consulted *Ifá* oracle about his destiny and he was required to provide anything in form of sacrifice, he did it without hesitation. However, despite his commitment and adherence to instructions, he did not seem to have any headway as failure trailed him about. He became tired and fed-up that he decided to carry his protests to *Olódùmarè*'s court-yard. When he narrated his experiences concerning the number of sacrifices he had obediently offered but all to no avail, *Olódùmarè* himself became so angry that he ordered that *Ọrúnmilà* be sent forth from the earth.

As *Ọrúnmilà* approached the court of *Olódùmarè*, he saw from afar that *Olódùmarè* was visibly angry and that his eyes were filled with fury. *Olódùmarè* flared up in anger saying *Ọrúnmilà* had been very unfair to *Akápò*. *Ọrúnmilà* was equally infuriated and he was speechless. He later busted into uncontrollable tears and started chanting *Ìyẹrẹ* in elegiac form saying:

One who gives a verdict judgment
on hearing just a version of the accusation
is a wicked, partial arbiter
Why can't you listen to the second version (p.59).

When *Ọrúnmilà* finished saying this, *Olódùmarè* calmed down and allowed him to give his own side of the story. In response, *Ọrúnmilà* claimed that he had no fault for the pathetic abject-poverty condition in which *Akápò* had found himself. *Ọrúnmilà* explained that he usually did his part whenever a sacrifice was offered. He added that he had discharged the responsibility placed on his shoulders by *Olódùmarè* very well and that it was the partner of *Akápò* (in the metaphysical realm) who should be called upon to explain what really went wrong. *Akápò*'s partner (his inner head) testified that he usually got things that

Ọrúnmilà offered to him as sacrifice but the fact was that the agreement reached with *Akápò* had a specific date before things could be alright for him. He said there was nothing he could do to save the situation before his appointed time. *Olódùmarè* was now very happy. He consoled *Ọrúnmilà* not to be annoyed as the friction was caused by exaggerative accounts of human beings. This accounted for why *Olódùmarè* did not listen to his own side of the story before proclaiming verdict. *Olódùmarè*, there and then, commanded that no matter the importance of the issue, direct interaction between him and human beings must cease henceforth, and they should only reach him through delegations of unseen forces.

The import of the narrative, therefore, is that in case of conflict or quarrel between two parties, the arbiter should ensure that he/she listens to both parties before passing judgment. Hence, the saying among the Yorùbá “*agbejọ ẹnìkan dá, àgbà òṣìkà*” (a partial arbiter is the chief of all evil-doers).

*Tolerance: Another virtue that is often preached by *Ifá* is tolerance. This is exhibited in *Òtúrá-rẹ̀rẹ̀* corpus which says:

Ìyáọṣọ!

Babaláwo Agbe ló dífá fún Agbe

Ìyáọṣọ!

Babaláwo Àlùkò ló dífá fún Àlùkò

Babaláwo Odídẹ̀rẹ̀ ló dífá fún Odídẹ̀rẹ̀

Babaláwo Àkùkọ̀ Ọtangàlàjà ló dífá fún Àkùkọ̀

Ọtangàlàjà

Tú ẹ̀ ọmọ lénjélénje nínú wọ̀n.

(Ìyáọṣọ!

Agbe's priest casts Ifá divination for Agbe

Ìyáọṣọ!

Àlùkò's priest casts Ifá divination for Àlùkò

Odídẹ̀rẹ̀' s priest casts Ifá divination for Odídẹ̀rẹ̀

Ìyáọṣọ!

Àkúkọ Ọtàngàlàjà's priest casts Ifá divination for
Àkúkọ Ọtàngàlàjà
The youngest of them all) (p.139)

According to *Òtúrá-rẹtẹ* corpus, there was a particular woman who had the following four children: *Agbe*, *Àlùkò*, *Odídẹrẹ* and *Àkúkọ*. *Àkúkọ* happened to be the youngest of them all. These children lost their father at their tender age. It was their mother who singlehandedly took care of them. However, this woman could not demonstrate any tolerance. She was too choleric and so very wicked to her children. She treated every offence with stern corporal punishment and display of intolerance. In her absence one day, the children felt hungry and they decided to look for what they could eat in the room. While searching, they mistakenly broke the pot which contained the red palm oil of their mother. They felt bad and became gripped with fear, knowing full well what their mother would do to them. These children gathered together to deliberate on what they could do to escape from the wrath of their mother. *Agbe* was the one to decide. He said he would leave for the sea-side (*Ilé Olókun*) where the forest was thick. *Àlùkò*, on his own part decided to leave for the lagoon's end. Whereas the decision of *Odídẹrẹ* on his own part was to leave for *Olú-Ìwó*, *Àkúkọ* resolved to wait to see what the reaction of their mother would be when she arrived. So he did hide himself in a corner.

When the woman arrived, she searched every nook and cranny of the house in vain. She then began to feel apprehensive. Moreover, when she saw the broken pot inside the room, she shouted and wept bitterly but there was nobody to come to her aid. She then began to panic why there was none of her children around. She could no more emit hot words as she would ordinarily have done. Instead, she changed her temperament to a more soothing one. Saying that mere breaking of the oil pot should not be sufficient reason for their flight from home, she was meaning that to demonstrate her

quest for her children. It was then *Àkùkò* (cock) noticed this change of attitude, he crowed from his hide-out to all his brothers that they should come home since their mother did not complain after all. The reply given by *Agbe* was that he had already decided to head towards the jungle and no one could draw him back. *Àlùkò* said the same thing that he had already made for the savannah region. This was how all the three children fled away, remaining *Àkùkò* that is still living within the town and house premises till today. With this incident, it becomes clear that intolerant people cannot be good leaders either in homes or public places.

Religions in Nigeria: A closer look

Most religious crises such as Saki and Ilorin (1986), OIC controversy (1986), Jos crisis (2001) that have been witnessed in Nigeria were caused by intolerance between the adherents of the two foreign religions, namely Islam and Christianity. It is noted that such ugly rivalry that results to crisis or violence has not been recorded in the history of Nigeria where adherents of two different indigenous religions clash over issue of superiority or trying to win members. In most cases, despite the fact that the two foreign religions usually come out, in the name of evangelism, to condemn the practice of traditional religion, yet the adherents of traditional religion have not come out to cause public disturbance as in the case of Islam and Christianity. I, in recent time, had a discussion with an adherent of *Ìgunnukó* masquerade cult in Abéòkúta, Ogun State of Nigeria over the relationship between them and those practicing Islam and Christianity in his neighbourhood. The man replied that the relationship between them and adherent of other faiths is cordial. He added that, though, the leaders of these faiths usually, in their sermons, condemn them and their religion but they are tolerant about it. He even mentioned that despite some of these foreign religious leaders patronise them for spiritual assistance to attract more members or other issues,

and at the same time go to the public to condemn them, yet they are not provoked. He claimed that their tolerance is rooted in the ethics of their religion not to disclose any secret entered into with another person, that is why it is unethical for them to come out openly to say “Pastor A or Imam B” do patronise them. Compared to Islam and Christianity, the degree of tolerance and pragmatism in indigenous religion is remarkable. For instance, in my home town, Abeokuta, the capital city of Ogun State, Nigeria, there are adherents of various indigenous religions such as *Ògún* (god of iron), *Ṣàngó* (god of thunder), *Ifá* (god of wisdom) worshippers, who relate peacefully and harmoniously among themselves. Each of these religions has a definite period in a year which they celebrate their gods in form of festival. During these festivals, adherents of other religions join their friends and families in the celebration without rancour. To me, this is a lesson to be learnt by all. This is the foundation on which the African/Nigerian society was established. It is common to find a husband and wife propitiating different divinities and yet living in peace and harmony. Modern religions like Islam and Christianity are aliens to Nigeria. Their incursion into the country has brought a lot of disaffection, hatred and suspicion among the people than uniting them. African religion fosters peace amongst its members and in the society at large. Dopamu (1988: 89) has pointed out that when one looks at the relationship between African religion and other religions in Nigeria, one discovers that African religion has related to them in a constructive manner, its purpose being to maintain peace and concord in the society. He notes that African religion with its communal background has always been tolerant, accommodating and cohesive in embracing even strangers without segregation.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to establish the fact that indigenous religion, as exemplified in selected *Ifá* corpuses, is capable of addressing some societal vices that have bedevilled Nigeria today. It also recalled some religious crises that have been recorded in Nigerian history due to intolerance and unhealthy rivalry between the two foreign religions. The chapter examined some factors from *Ifá* corpuses that can bring about peace and harmony in Nigeria. These factors are hospitality/kindness, avoidance of wickedness, honesty/integrity, impartiality, and tolerance. One of the problems facing Nigerians today is the negative feeling against the indigenous religions labelling them as fetish. They tend to see nothing worth embracing in the religions and the people practicing them. That is why these people are not always recognised or considered in the scheme of things in the country. This chapter is concluded by suggesting that the society should look inwards to see those virtues that are useful in the practice of indigenous religion and incorporate them in the building of a virile society.

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Chapter 8

Intangible Heritage Politics and Sustainability in Africa: Reflections on the Politics of Language in Mozambique

Munyaradzi Mawere

Introduction

The discourse on language politics has sustained debates of epic proportions since the dawn of colonialism in Africa. This has been so for two major reasons: First, most of the languages used on the continent are foreign in so far as they are languages that were imposed by Western imperialists during the colonial era. Second, to the best of my knowledge, all African countries are multilingual yet the dominant foreign languages have continued to be used even some decades after national independence such as English, French, and Portuguese. Ajayi *et al* (1996: 16-20) traces the origins of African reactions to colonial education to the late 19th century when both James Johnson in Sierra Leone and Edward Blyden in Liberia criticised the neglect of African cultures and history by Mission Schools. Johnson alleged that these schools caused Africans to lose self-respect and “love for our own race.”

In Mozambique, there are more than thirty indigenous languages. Among these, Portuguese has according to Mozambique’s language policy been the country’s sole official language since the colonial era. By language policy, I mean language(s) officially recognised for use by the government of a country, education authorities, and employers (in both public and private sectors) as the medium of communication. The choice of language to use in aforementioned contexts remains a sensitive issue especially in former colonised countries such as

Mozambique where languages at school and on the job market was imposed as a result of colonialism. A number of variables and factors ranging from historical background, socio-cultural, sociolinguistic, pedagogical, political, and economic need to be seriously considered in choosing an official language for a country. Yet, even considering all these important factors, Portuguese remains the sole official language in Mozambique. This is in spite of the fact that the majority of Mozambicans regard Portuguese as *língua de colonizador* (colonial language) and also that those Mozambicans who speak the language learn it at school as an official language. Unfortunately, those who are incompetent in Portuguese are in most cases disadvantaged given that the language is the main medium of instruction throughout the education and the sole official language used on the job market. Moreover, Portuguese remains a measure of educational achievement such that it is associated with prestige and status.

In view of this observation, this chapter advocates a multilingual policy that addresses the current linguistic injustice perpetrated against the Mozambican people. In this whole attempt, the chapter explores possibilities of using indigenous languages alongside Portuguese as languages of instruction in the education system and official languages in business and on the job market. The reasons given for this suggestion are based on the need to restore the value of indigenous languages while fostering partnership and complementarity between indigenous knowledge and the foreign languages currently used in many countries across the continent.

Language policy and education discourse in Mozambique: A brief background

In many if not all African countries, educational systems after independence begun with European design, modified to fit the interests and needs of the colonial project and its designers. Such a reality, in no doubt, necessitated the need for

a radical change and other such reformations in the educational sector and many other. It is, however, unfortunate that after independence from the European imperialists many African countries engaged in civil unrest of one form or another instead of concentrating in reformations of the colonial administration they inherited from the imperialists. In Mozambique, for example, the 19 year devastating civil war closed or destroyed 3,400 schools (Woolman 2001: 39) thereby doing down Samora Machel's policy declaration for schools in 1974 in which he called for elimination of illiteracy, liberation from capitalist mentality, elimination of the negative aspects of African traditional culture, empowerment of the masses through education, and restructuring of schools as learning communities based on trust between teachers and pupils. Machel's ideas echoed the FRELIMO goals of building social solidarity by removal of racial and ethnic discrimination, emancipation of women, and cultivation of respect for science, service, and work (see Woolman 2001). For Machel, as with FRELIMO party, concern with combating illiteracy, which stood at 93% in 1975, was one among the chief priorities. This concern prompted Mozambique to adopt an equal access to education after independence from the Portuguese colonialists, a goal re-stated in the education laws of 1983 and 1992, to be achieved by free and compulsory education. The 1992 law, however, deleted most of the Marxist-Leninist theory without altering the basic structure of the school system (Woolman 2001: 33). This reflects the demise of this ideology in world politics. This means that important reform initiatives begun in late 1992 including commitment to "education for all," basic education, and system expansion.

Yet even in view of these highlighted changes, the education sector remains trapped in the abysmal and deep labyrinths of problems of all kind. Until as recent as the turn of the millennium, the only official language of Mozambique, both in the administration and in education, was Portuguese. Portuguese is a foreign language that was imposed on

Mozambicans during the colonial occupation of Mozambique by the Portuguese people. It is even more worrying to note that while Portuguese continue to be popularised, there are more than thirty-two 'local' or legitimately 'national languages.' Besides, Portuguese, the official language, is the mother tongue of less than 1% of the population. Though a talk about local languages continue taking its toll, these languages continue to be marginalised such that they are only peripherally used in the educational system and in the job market. The colonial and Euro-centric mentality that someone who continues hanging and stressing the need for a positive change towards local languages is conservative remains looming thereby thwarting all efforts to Africanise Mozambique's education sector.

The above testifies the fact that education language policy in Mozambique after independence has been marked by very gradual strides towards Africanisation. As pointed out above, until recently in Mozambique, Portuguese has been used as the major if not practically the only medium of instruction in primary, secondary, tertiary and adult education. Such a policy should be identified as a major factor underlying primary level learning difficulties, grade repetition and high dropout rates especially in view of the fact that less than 20% of the Mozambican population speak Portuguese (cf. Woolman 2001). Citing a similar problem in Senegal, ... noted with concern that In a recently published dictionary of agricultural terminology in an African language (Pulaar), Fagerberg-Diallo (2011: 2) notes that the authors explain that they decided to compile this dictionary after the "frustrating attempts to transmit scientific knowledge" in an agricultural extension program. He goes on to note that the author tell the story of speaking with "... a young technician at our institute for agricultural research who was in daily contact with researchers there, who constantly spoke with them in French about every detail concerning growing cotton, who carried out experiments for them. And yet one day he admitted that until he had read the version in Pulaar, he had never understood the booklet

written in French about the insects which destroy a cotton crop.” As the authors exclaim, “If he couldn’t understand it, who else possibly could?”

In Mozambican secondary schools, English is introduced in grade 8 and French in grade 11. While thirteen African languages have now been recognised as national languages in Mozambique only Portuguese, English and French remain privileged to be taught in secondary schools. Curriculum revisions in the late 1990s planned to introduce these Mozambican languages as mediums of instruction in early primary grades, particularly in rural areas where Portuguese is virtually unknown. Unfortunately, up until the present times, nothing much has been done to ensure that the aforementioned languages are at least taught in schools. Practically, Portuguese language remains the major if not sole medium of communication in schools and the job market.

In Mozambique as in many other formerly colonised multilingual African countries, language policy reflects the need to preserve national unity by not granting official preference to any one African language. In addition to offering a culturally-neutral means of communication, the alien European languages provide continuity with colonial political foundations and a basis for essential contact with the outside world. English, in particular, is rapidly emerging as the dominant world language.

In view of the above, it is clear that while Curriculum development in the 1990s has addressed several problem areas affecting Mozambique’s well-being and unity; these include environmental education, population and family life, multicultural education and education for peace, more is still desired to improve the education system in the country, particularly in view of curriculum change. Yet the need for policy reformulation in Mozambique has, however, been precipitated by rapid population increase after civil war and urbanisation in Mozambique which caused a growth in school-age population that continues to outpace school construction; this leads to overcrowding and reliance on substandard and unsanitary

buildings (Woolman 2001). Insufficient supplies of textbooks and lack of essential facilities and equipment for science laboratories detracts from the quality and potential of instruction, and hence has necessitated need for policy educational policy in Mozambique (cf. Mawere and Rambe 2011). As further observed by Mawere and Rambe, rural schools are more affected by these deficiencies than urban districts. Scarce resources and inadequate government expenditures are at the centre of many of these problems.

Which indigenous language(s) to consider as official? The Mozambican dilemma

While majority of the indigenous Mozambicans seem to agree that indigenous languages should be adopted and used in the education system and on job market, the official language remains Portuguese. One wonders why Mozambique is taking so long to implement its language policy and adopt some of its indigenous languages alongside Portuguese as official languages. On critical analysis, one however, notices that Mozambique is hesitant to change its language policy mainly for nationalistic reasons. Mozambique is one of the African languages with numerous languages. It is a linguistically heterogeneous society with more than thirty indigenous languages. This poses ethnic and ideological problems as the country faces difficulties on the criterion to be used to choose the indigenous language(s) that should be adopted as official languages. From a nationalistic perspective, Portuguese is viewed as neutral given that it is a language from outside. Besides, Portuguese as a language that was imposed to all Mozambicans, and for nearly 500 years, the language has a unifying role. It has no ethnic label which makes it easier to be used at national level in government, education, external affairs and trade. For the same reason, political leaders prefer the use of Portuguese to indigenous languages in handling the country's affairs. It is important to note that this nationalistic

factor influenced the role and status given to the language, Portuguese even after Mozambique's national independence in 1975.

The second reason that makes Mozambique hesitant to change its language policy is that the indigenous languages in Mozambique such as Xichangana, Xironga, Ndau, Tewe, etc. are not quickly identified with standardised print languages. Even contrary to the preference of the majority, the use of Portuguese dominates given that it quickly identifies with standardised print languages. The problem of standardisation of indigenous languages in Mozambique has largely been a result of lack of publication of reading materials such as book in the languages. In fact, little or virtually nothing has been done to promote publishing in indigenous languages yet as Ngulube (2012) noted, 'publishing has an important role in promoting and reviving indigenous languages' (p. 15). This is germane to Bernard's (1997: 143) suggestion that 'for those linguists who want to help preserve language diversity, there are, in my view, two best things to do. One is to help native people develop more language-nest programmes. The other is to help native people develop publishing houses'. No wonder Daniel Gilman (cited in Okai 2000: 153), the first president of John Hopkins University, had this to say with regard to publishing reading materials especially books:

Without books, history is silent, literature dumb, science crippled and speculation at a standstill. Without books, the development of civilisation would have been impossible. They are engineers of change, windows of the world, and lighthouses erected in the sea of time. They are companions, magicians, bankers of treasuries of the mind. Books are humanity in print.

Throughout history, evidence on the importance of publishing are abound. Literature by European explorers, hunters, and Euro-centric scholars, for example, played a significant role in portraying and perpetuating a pejorative image of Africa and the African people. Of this literature, I single out Henry Rider Haggard's novel, *King Solomon's*

Mines published in 1885. In this novel, African people, through characters such as Gagool, are portrayed as backward, primitive, ugly, witches, superstitious, and uncivilised. Joseph Conrad's novel, *Heart of Darkness* published in 1902, is another literary work that advanced the myth of African primitiveness. Through the character, Kurtz a European who after staying many years with the African people of Belgium Congo, went native. Showing how mingling with Africans and adopting their cultural beliefs makes someone backward, Conrad reveals that Kurtz was finally discovered by the European sailor, Marlow more savage than the African people he was now co-existing with. In Western circles, this novel was even hailed as a masterpiece such that the myths and images stereotyping the African people it portrayed were preached all over Europe, America and beyond. Philosophical works by Western scholars of the likes of Immanuel Kant, Hegel, David Hume, among others, are also worth mentioning when it comes to the analysis of how published reading materials could be influential to people's worldviews. In view of these examples, I submit that the assertion by Gilman makes an important point that as long as indigenous languages are not published, their history, efficacy in communication, and the values (whether cultural, social, political or economic) associated with them will ultimately die a natural death. To avoid such a situation as Mozambique is currently in, there is need for academics and publishers around the country to publish reading materials in indigenous languages. Ngulube (2012: 21) captures this aptly when he argues that 'publishers and writers as major role players central to the knowledge production and reproduction chain should play a pivotal function in promoting and preserving indigenous languages that are marginalised and endangered'. For Ngulube (*Ibid*),

Publishers (larger or smaller) should thus:

- Desist from the tendency of promoting writing and publishing in the official languages at the expense of other indigenous languages;

- Balance the profit motive and their cultural and social responsibility;

- Invest the profits made on best-selling titles and educational books to subsidise and experiment with new talent and ideas;

- Bring books into the reach of the rural poor;

- Cultivate the reading culture themselves so that they reap the rewards of their efforts (Motsaathebe 2011: 123);

- Find out through market research what people really want to read and then publish as needed;

- Communicate the research on the different language varieties in context;

- Build capacity of the smaller publishers through training;

- Exploit technology and explore new methods of production in order to reduce the cost of books;

- Promote the establishment of sales outlets in rural areas;

- Utilise libraries and librarians in the distribution and utilisation of books;

- Produce low cost materials while maintaining high standards in editing, printing and binding (i.e. in the case of hard copies);

- Exploit new opportunities in indigenous language publishing;

- Take a gamble on young and unknown authors;

- Make publishing decisions based on market research; and

- Improve the infrastructures of publishing.

On Ngulube's list above, I add that publishers should make an effort to make outreaches in all corners of the country especially in the rural areas where exposure is limited. Such outreaches could serve to scout talent and to promote writing and publication in indigenous languages. Also, publishers should make it a policy to respond as quickly as possible to

those authors who send their manuscripts for consideration for publication.

Thirdly, globalisation poses a very big threat to any attempt by Mozambique to discontinue or demote Portuguese from its current status. While in principle, globalisation has been understood as doing away with boundaries whether cultural, social, economic, and political, the reality is there are certain languages that seem to be considered as global. In this category, European languages, particularly those of the former African colonisers such as English, French, and Portuguese dominate. African indigenous languages remain invisible in spite of this so-called 'globalisation movement'. In most African countries, one or more of these languages continue to be used in politics, education, business and other such development initiatives thereby tempting these countries to retain the colonial languages. How then can one expect visibility of African languages? It is against this background that to African countries such as Mozambique, globalisation poses the temptation of hanging onto the colonial language so as to keep pace with developments at the global level.

Yet, even with all these views tabled before the Mozambican government, the dilemma that grips the government by the neck lies on the criterion that should be used to choose indigenous language(s) to be adopted as official language(s). In this study, I however, insist that no matter what it may cost a multi-lingual policy, which acknowledges the value of indigenous languages should be upheld and one or some of these languages be adopted alongside Portuguese as official in the education system, in the job market and other such national government affairs. In the section below I examine why indigenous languages should be preserved.

Endangered heritage: Why should Mozambique's indigenous languages be preserved?

Indigenous language is one of the most important heritages that were bequeathed to indigenous societies by their own ancestors. The continued use of ex-colonial languages as official language contributes significantly to the marginalisation of African indigenous languages (see also Bentahila 1988). Besides, using one's indigenous language is a right that should be recognised in all societies across the world. As Thondhlana (2002: 31) rightfully noted there is always need to respect and treat 'linguistic rights as human rights'. The unfortunate thing, however, is that many people especially in Africa's developing countries are ignorant of their linguistic rights. While in some countries such as South Africa exist language boards, the Pan South African Language Board (PanSALB), this is exacerbated by the fact that in many of these countries, there are not even language boards to represent the wish of the people as well as address all problems to do with language.

Yet, as rightfully reported by Busia (1964: 31-33) there was a widespread expectation before and after independence that "education should be rooted in Africa's own cultural heritage and values and have relevance to African societies." Busia like scholars such as Ngugi wa Thiongo (1986) and Julius Nyerere (1968) felt that schools could only preserve and transmit this culture by maintaining African languages. This point was made even more forcefully by Moumouni (1968: 275), who claims that "real literacy ... can only be taught in an African language and should extend to the entire population."

This thinking does not only find homage in scholars such as Ngugi wa Thiongo and Moumouni cited above. Even worldviews in some African societies do support the need for upholding one's own culture and identity. The Igbo people of Nigeria's proverb: "One who does not know his identity is not worth living," is a case in point. The proverb, as many other aphorisms, idioms, and adages emphasise the need for one to

know his or her own identity. And, one's identity could be fully understood if the education that one passes through has a curriculum inclined towards culture and indigenous language such that a curriculum void of such inclinations tantamount to misleading the learners. Francis Nyamnjoh (2012a: 130), agreeing with Joseph Conrad (1995: 90), aptly captures this:

To educate in postcolonial Africa in the 21st century, without making visible the dignity, creativity and humanity of Africans, is to perpetuate Joseph Conrad's imagery of Africa as 'heart of darkness' (Conrad, 1995: 90). The production, positioning and consumption of knowledge are far from a neutral, objective and disinterested process. It is socially and politically mediated by hierarchies of humanity and human agency imposed by particular relations of power (Bourdieu, 2004: 18–21). Far from being a 'liberating force' that celebrates 'achievement' over 'ascription', education 'plays a critical role in the reproduction of the distribution of cultural capital and thus in the reproduction of the structure of social space'. It is drawn upon by the elite to stake claims 'in the struggle for the monopoly on dominant positions' and serves as a 'legitimizing illusion'.

As underlined by Nyamnjoh above, asymmetrical relations will always exist in the production and dissemination of knowledge as long as the process is controlled by the elite. In this regard, education and in particular knowledge production and dissemination become more of a political game than it is an enlightening process. Critical scholars in and on Africa question such mode of knowledge production. Nyamnjoh (2012b: 65):

How does one keep one's preconceptions in check in order to do justice to encounters with difference? Put differently, is it possible to achieve the level of objectivity needed to see and represent the elephant for what it truly is

– a complex and nuanced reality that cannot be easily reduced to its constituent parts or limited to sensory perceptions? Does it matter what the elephant has to say (if it could speak) about how it is perceived and represented? How does one account for the eventuality that the elephant could be beyond knowing by one individual or even by all blind men taken together?

In response to these questions, Nyamnjoh (2012b) suggests that we must appreciate conviviality while embracing different ways of knowing given that problems are always approached from different perspectives and particular angles such that “even the most industrious and creative of explorers can achieve only a partial account of what the elephant is” (p. 65). Nyamnjoh bases his reasoning on the understanding that “science is a collective pursuit, and that no one has a monopoly on insights and the truth. Social truth being negotiable, it requires humility and mutual accommodation on the part of those who lay claim to it” (p.65). These suggestions imply that every position, as any form of heritage such as language, should be respected in its own right.

I should, however, underline that grappling with the question of knowledge and heritage in many post-colonial African societies is like addressing the question, *Religious Tensions – Friend or Foe?* posed by Benson and Williams (2011: 77-78), in which Robert Putnam and David Campbell argue that American religion has experienced two countervailing transformations of polarization and pluralism over the last fifty years. In this case, polarization refers to the emergence of a new religious fault line in the American society. Left on its own, Putnam and Campbell theorise, such a fault line could split open and tear the nation apart. As Putnam and Campbell argue, the existence of pluralism is, therefore, precisely why the fault line has not become a gaping chasm (Putnam and Campbell, 2012: 5). I should comment here that this argument is, in one way or another, akin to Bogart’s (1994: x) claim that

Canada's "lack of identity is a virtue for it is the basis upon which our aptitude for compromise and moderation (even now being sorely tested) rests." However, the emphasis in this chapter is on conviviality that recognises the cultures and heritage (including knowledge, belief systems and linguistic heritage) of all members of the society (in this case the Mozambican society) especially the indigenous once that through slavery and colonialism have, through time, suffered pejorative labels, marginalisation, and many other forms of subjugation.

Overcoming Mozambican linguistic problems for sustainability: Some suggestions

The current situation in Mozambique is largely a result of past historical circumstances which transformed the Mozambican society in ways too numerous to mention. To change such a situation requires a revolution that transforms all structures in the society including social, political, economic, and the language situation. This calls for an overturn in language policy and adoption of indigenous language(s) as official language(s). This sounds more radical as it will in no doubt dissociate African societies from the Western and American societies, but truly speaking if African languages are not used in formal deals across the world, then global sustainable development will always remain a tantalising dream. In fact, sustainability in any society goes hand in glove with language. This is because language has an important role in the development of conservational strategies, technological skills, vocational skills, and in interaction in general. Put differently, people communicate with their immediate environment and with each other using language. And, they communicate much better if they use their indigenous languages. I have argued that a child without language is like a tree without roots: It can be swept away by wind at any given time. This calls for a radical change in Mozambique's language policy. It dictates that at

school, the medium of instruction for most of the subjects should be the children's mother languages. For this to be more effective, the children taught in their mother languages should have their examinations set and written in the language. On this note, Portuguese should be taught as an independent subject as is with the case with other languages such as Geography, history and others. Studies across the world generally agree that one's 'mother tongue quickly translates into education for sustainable development' (Mavesera 2011: 80). Woolman (2001: 41) puts this forcefully when he says: "The importance of African language development is further underscored by the historical reality that early nation-building in Europe was closely linked to the cultivation of vernacular languages and literature". This should be done in phases and systematically, starting right from the primary level right up to tertiary level, if it is to be successful. And most importantly, such a move could gain momentous yields if African governments, in this case, Mozambican government and all its people have a positive attitude towards their own indigenous languages. The problem is that while the Mozambican people has the capacity to change their linguistic situation, many of them have been decolonised to the extent of shunning away their own cultures and languages. This resonates with Triandis (1971) cited in Okombo's (1991: 591) observation that 'we [Africans] have the technical knowledge to change the world, but we do not have the attitude to bring the change'. The need to relate education to African social structure is central to the transformational ideas of Kenyatta (1965: 123). He enjoined teachers to:

promote progress and ... preserve all that is best in the traditions of the African people and assist them in creating a new culture, which though its roots are still in the soil, is yet modified to meet the pressure of modern conditions.

Similarly, Moumouni (1968: 284; 292) called on education to respond to “the profound aspirations of the African masses” by “improvement of the physical and psychological living conditions;” however, he also cautioned of the need to “safeguard the ‘African originality’ and the ‘African personality’ in their most authentic and most positive aspects.” Moumouni, thus, advocates for a conscious reconstruction.

Conclusion

This chapter has critically examined the politics surrounding intangible heritage, particularly language in post-colonial Africa. While the interrogation of this politics could be somehow universally applied to most of the post-colonial states in Africa, the present chapter makes particular reference to Mozambique. It has been revealed that local languages are a vehicle to development and sustainability such that the chapter has as one of its recommendations that that development and sustainability in Africa will only be fully realised if the continent put on the forefront its indigenous language.

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Chapter 9

Indigenous Knowledge: A Key Factor in Africa's Sustainable Development

Samuel Awuah-Nyamekye

Introduction

It is a well-known fact that any society that develops effective means to maintain and imparts its local knowledge base stands to develop more successfully. It has been observed that local epistemologies and their transmission to a community's members especially its youth are the key means any human society sustains itself (Kuupuo, 2010; Awuah-Nyamekye, 2014). This has huge implications for the current crop of leadership of Africa against the backdrop that Western-based scientific knowledge has now taken the centre stage in Africa's developmental agendas. Today, African indigenous knowledge has been undermined to the extent that it has been described as irrational, superstitious, anti-development and unscientific (Mawere, 2014). In Ghana, for instance, Andrew (2005) emphasises that "colonial conservationism relegated local knowledge systems to a 'second division'" (p. 36). Domfe (2007: 47) contends that "indigenous knowledge continues to be largely disregarded in development planning; it plays only a marginal role in biodiversity management and its contribution to society in general is neglected" (p.47). In countries such as Zimbabwe, South Africa, and Mozambique, indigenous practices have associated with derogatory terms such as unscientific, superstitious, and illogical and hence were discouraged or even forbidden by the colonial administrators (Semali and Kincheole 1999; Mandondo, 2000; Mukamuri,

1995; Manzungu *et al.* 2002; Mawere 2012; 2013; 2014; 2015; Shizha 2013).

The onslaught against the use of indigenous knowledge particularly in Africa has been sustained to the point that the indigenous people themselves are beginning to doubt the capacity of their local knowledge system to help in enhancing their development agendas. A case in point is the statement that Briggs (2005) claims to have been made by a small-scale farmer in the Coastal region of Tanzania during his (Briggs) fieldwork in the region: *Kama elimu ya asili ni nzuri kiasi bicho, kwa nini shamba langu ni hafifu?* The English translation of this statement according to Briggs is “If indigenous knowledge is so good, why is my farm so poor?” According to Briggs, this farmer even expressed his desire to employ what he calls “modern technology and modern farming methods” (Briggs, 2005: 99) provided he has the means to afford them. This claim in fact, runs contrary to what obtains in Ghana where indigenous farmers generally complain of the taste and quality of foodstuffs such as garden eggs, tomatoes, pineapples that have been produced through the use of chemicals such as fertilizers, carbide, and so on.

The destruction of African indigenous knowledge by the colonialist was taken to be necessary for progress or development. This misconception still lingers on and the post-independence African leaders have yet to address this albatross on the continent’s neck as it’s acknowledged by President Robert Mugabe in his acceptance speech when assuming African Union leadership in 2015. Many post-independence African governments have failed to manage their natural resources successfully because the policies have been pursued without regard to the input of the local peoples, an important stakeholder as far as natural resources use and management are concerned. Consequently, Africa has been bedevilled with self-imposed hardships in the areas of social, economic and sustainable development. I described the hardship as self-imposed because African leaders had the opportunity to

champion African-led developmental programmes but for sheer lack of vision and political will power, Africa continues to languish in the current hardships.

I must, however, underscore the fact that I am not advocating for a complete retreat into the continent's past and adopt hook, line and sinker the way things used to be done in the pre-colonial era since the fact of population explosion that the continent is currently going through and the realities of the demands of modern market economy and its attendant factors will make such a venture—complete retreat to the past—anachronistic. I am also not rejecting Western scientific knowledge but my concern is the blanket claims of Western Scientific knowledge to universality and limitless spatial transferability. I must point out as well that neither am I trying to romanticise indigenous knowledge, since I am not unaware of some of the inherent problems associated with the application of indigenous knowledge. My argument, however is that it is not prudent to demonise indigenous knowledge system which indeed has been found to be the bedrock of the knowledge system of every society (see World Bank, 2007). Agrawal (1995), an important scholar in indigenous studies is quite happy about the current debate on the need to mainstream indigenous knowledge system into development issues as he stresses that this debate represents “a shift from the preoccupation with the centralised, technically oriented solutions of the past decades that failed to alter life prospects for a majority of the peasants and small farmers of the world” (Agrawal, 1995: 414).

Therefore, my central argument in this chapter is the call for the adoption and integration of those practices such as local knowledge pertaining to soil type (see Ellis-Jones and Tengberg, 2000; Lamers and Feil, 1995; Osunade 1994; Kundiri, Jarvis and Bullock, 1997), characteristics of certain plants and animals and their effects on natural resources (mostly are tried and tested) which can easily be used today and further study to identify those that need reappraisal to suit

current demands. But before, I proceed to give details on the above issues; I deem it necessary to undertake a conceptual analysis of terms such as indigenous/traditional knowledge, sustainability and development, which are key or germane to the discussion.

Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKSs)

Before I discuss the term ‘indigenous knowledge’, I propose to first delineate the term *indigenous* due to the various connotations it has assumed of late (see Nakashima and Rou’e, 2002). The term *indigenous* has prevailed as a generic term for many years but not without a problem. The term has now assumed a diversity of meaning, especially when it is applied to a particular people. Some scholars see it as pejorative when a group of people are referred to as *indigenous*. For this reason, the world body like the UN is hesitant to use it. Rather, it has developed what it calls, a modern understanding of this term based on the following:

- Self- identification as indigenous peoples at the individual level and accepted by the community as their member.
- Historical continuity with pre-colonial and/or pre-settler societies
- Strong link to territories and surrounding natural resources
- Distinct social, economic or political systems
- Distinct language, culture and beliefs
- Form non-dominant groups of society
- Resolve to maintain and reproduce their ancestral environments and systems as distinctive peoples and communities (UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, p. 1)

Notwithstanding the various shades of connotation or nuances that the term ‘indigenous people’ has assumed of late, the term is preferred in this chapter and it is used to refer to

original or *aboriginal* or, it refers to the root, something natural or innate As Adora Hoppers (2002: 8) puts it. And thus, ‘indigenous people’ should be understood as those people whose forebears founded settlements where they are found today and are attached to the customs and traditions of their forebears. They are so to speak, the people who can lay legitimate claim to the land they are occupying today through ancestry.

Today, a body of literature has emerged that links the word *knowledge* to *indigenous*- Indigenous Knowledge. Indigenous Knowledge has variously been conceptualised. Some refer to it as ‘ethnoscience’ or the ‘stock of knowledge’ as well as “systems of concepts, beliefs, and ways of learning” (Chambers, 1983) held by the specific communities. Hardesty (1977) sees it as ‘the study of systems of knowledge developed by a given culture to classify the objects, activities and events of its universe’ (cited in Snively and Corsiglia, 2001: 10). Some refer to it as community knowledge, folkloric knowledge (Sillitoe 1998; Kargbo, 2005). The same term is at times referred to as traditional knowledge in some literature (Warren, 1991; Sillitoe, 1998; Kawooya, 2006). Warren (1991: 6) for instance, contends that:

The term ‘indigenous knowledge’ (IK) is used synonymously with ‘traditional’ and ‘local’ knowledge to differentiate the knowledge developed by a given community from the international knowledge system sometimes also called ‘Western’ system, generated through universities, government research centres and private industry. IK refers to the knowledge of indigenous peoples as well as any other defined community

But the problem that often crops up when this knowledge system is described as traditional is that it is presumed to be static. But I must point out that those who are very familiar with indigenous African knowledge would realise that this is far

from the truth, for the traditional or indigenous African peoples' knowledge is dynamic (see Mawere, 2014). It is based on tried and tested observations. Hobsbawm, and Ranger (1983: 4), for instance have argued that traditional does not preclude innovation and change up to a point but new tradition can be born out of an old one. This is what they refer to as 'the invention of tradition' (see Mammo, 1999: 16).

One definition which can be said to fit the Africans' understanding of their knowledge system is the one given by Marrewijk (1998), his editorial to the July 1998 6 (2) of the Indigenous Knowledge and Development Monitor (IKDM) thus:

Indigenous knowledge is the sum total of the knowledge and skills which people in a particular geographic area possess, and which enable them to get the most out of their natural environment. Most of this knowledge and these skills have been passed down from earlier generations, but individual men and women in each new generation adapt and add to this body of knowledge in a constant adjustment to changing circumstances and environmental conditions. They in turn pass on the body of knowledge intact to the next generation, in an effort to provide them with survival strategies (Marrewijk, 1998: 1).

Although the above definition has been criticized by scholars such as Brouwer (1998), Sillitoe (1998) and Berkes (1999), I still find it less problematic in terms of indigenous African peoples' worldview. This is because for the Africans, *Indigenous Knowledge* refers to the kind of knowledge systems that Africans had developed over the years, sustained through means such as; religion, myths, proverbs, customs and traditions and other various means and transmitted from generation to generation predating their encounter with Western culture (system of knowledge). It is this kind of knowledge that has guided them to live sustainably with their

environment prior to their encounter with the Western European knowledge systems which have been generated as Warren puts it ‘through universities, government research centres and private industry.’¹

Understanding Sustainability

Sustainability is simply, able to be maintained or ability to endure but today, the term is used to “describe community and economic development in terms of meeting the needs of present without compromising the ability of future generation to meet their needs” (Park, 2007: 439). That is, the ability to find or put appropriate measures in place to ensure the continuous use of a society’s natural endowment to improve the standard of living of the people without compromising that of future generations. In other words, it refers to a society’s ability to achieve economic development and improve the quality of life for its people, now and for future generations. In recent times, due to the importance attached to the idea of sustainability, the concept is broadened as ‘comprehensive sustainability’ and this has been viewed as an attempt that “considers the so-called natural environment and human politics in equal measure and means not only reconciling preservation and development but also achieving social justice and equality” (ASLE Newsletter, 2015). For a society to be able to sustain extraction of its natural resources there is the need to develop capacity to innovate, transform and execute plans to achieve sustainability in the use of the available natural resource.

¹ See Mawere, M. 2014a. *Culture, Indigenous Knowledge and Development in Africa: Reviving interconnections for sustainable Development*. Cameroon: Langaa Research and Publishing Common Initiative for the various terminologies that various scholars have given to indigenous knowledge.

Of late, the term ‘sustainability’ is linked with ‘development’ hence ‘sustainable development’, which I will discuss at the end of this section.

What is development?

In the words of Haynes (2009: 5), the term ‘development has long been vague yet predictive; struggling to acquire a precise meaning.’ No wonder it has been defined differently across disciplines. For Sibanda (2009), development refers to improvement in a country’s economic and social conditions. Quoting the World Bank, Sibanda (2009) says, ‘when referring to a country, it will be taken to mean reaching an acceptable standard of living for all people. It means that people have the basic things they need to live.’

From the above one can posit that the term ‘development’ is seen in materialistic or economic terms. I have argued somewhere that the concept of ‘development’ is conceptualised differently by different people at different times- development may be relative to time and space. (Awuah-Nyamekye, 2012: 75). In much the same way they have designed mechanisms or institutions to ensure not only their understanding of development but also how it (development) cannot pose danger to their lives and that of future generation.

In the indigenous African worldview, the term development is not limited to material and economic terms but it is viewed in a holistic way. For them, development is a process and in fact, a means of ensuring a holistic well-being of humans utilising judiciously the total environment of the people from both the sacral (religious) and secular point of views but not where there is economic growth at the cost of greater inequality, high unemployment rate, loss of cultural identity, consumption of foreign goods and depletion of resources needed by future generations (see Awuah-Nyamekye, 2012).

Sustainable development

The term development and its sustainability has variously been conceptualised or defined. Fowke and Prasad (1996) as quoted by Williams and Millington (2004: 99) for instance, have listed ‘at least eighty different, often competing and sometimes contradictory definitions’ of sustainable development. Implying that, the term defiles unanimity among scholars. It is against this backdrop that Williams and Millington sum up the debate as: “sustainable development is a notoriously difficult, slippery and elusive concept to pin down” (ibid.). At BBC Website, sustainable development is seen as “economic development without polluting environment: economic development maintained within acceptable levels of global resource depletion and environmental pollution” It further adds that “sustainable development is the principle which should guide politicians in planning the future ...” (BBC website April 1999). Williams and Millington contend that the differences in understanding the concept lies in the answers provided for addressing the issue of how to conjoin demand and resources (p.100). This, they christened ‘environmental paradox’.

What I must underscore is the fact that the concept of ‘sustainable development’ has not been a problem for the Indigenous African peoples. This is because long before the term became popular in 1987, the concept has been with the indigenous Africans and they understood it without any contradiction. Among the Akan of Ghana for instance, sustainable development is any human activity that: a) aims at affirming life in a holistic way, b) enables every generation to ensure its survival; and c) enables generations to hand over the survival potential to the future generation as directed by culture (which is influenced by religion)(see Awuah-Nyamekye 2009: 27). This is supported by numerous indigenous proverbs across Africa expressing the idea/concept of sustainable development. The Akan of Ghana for instance, have *Wusum brɔdɛ a, sum*

kwadu (lit. when you support the plantain plant do same for the banana plant). What is being emphasised here is that it is unwise to put all your hope or investment in a single project but you need to get alternative ways of doing things for difficult days. What this implies is that African peoples' understanding of the concept surely pre-dates the current best known definition of 'sustainable development' given by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) in 1987: "Economic and social development that meets the needs of the current generation without undermining the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED, 1987: 8, 43). Even this so-called popular definition according to Williams and Millington (2004: 100), "is resisted and contested by 'many commentators' because "it is allied to a particular worldview" (p.100). This points to the fact of non-unanimity of what sustainable development is about. The concept is broadly understood among indigenous Africans because for them, development with its sustainability is not limited to the balanced use of natural resources. But it is conceptualised to include human development and social harmony. This is because sustainable development will be meaningless if the beneficiaries are at each other's throat. This African understanding of the concept runs contrary to modern thought that sustainable development is a modern concept (Hopwood, Mellor, & O'Brien, 2005; Kendie & Martens, 2008).

Some indigenous African knowledge that can be tapped for sustainable development

It is amazing to see indigenous philosophers who are mostly elders of the communities, and mostly without formal education, providing excellent direction to people in areas such as social, cultural, economic and ecological sustainability in their various communities (see Marinova and Hossain, 2008). This experiential knowledge is acquired over time. It is, therefore, no wonder that Indigenous Africans can be argued

to be conversant with the dynamics of their physical environment, for I have had the occasion to interact with an experienced farmer who revealed that he would be able to determine which crop would be suitable for a particular soil by dipping his finger into the soil and tastings it, to determine the acidity or alkalinity of the soil. What this implies is that indigenous Africans had their own way of testing the suitability of a soil for a particular crop prior to the use of modern laboratory technology.

Again, evidence abounds in many African societies where the local people have proven to be more familiar with the dynamics of their environment than those who are sponsored by governments (the so-called experts). Dickson (2003) reports that a group of farmers in Ghana once told a group of foreign agricultural experts that there is a tree under which their crops grew well. These foreign agricultural experts doubted the observations of the farmers. But later on, these so-called experts discovered that, that particular tree has a root system that siphons up water both into its trunk, and also into the surrounding earth. Appiah-Opoku (1999) reports that indigenous Ghanaian farmers have a good knowledge of the characteristics of soils in their local environment. For instance the fertility of the soil is determined by the presence of clay; low proportion of sand and moisture; decayed organic matters; earthworms and certain plant species such as *asaman-ntorowa--Solanum torvum* in the soil (Appiah-Opoku, 1999: 221).

The above point to the level of depth of knowledge that indigenous Ghanaian people possess about their environment. This shows that traditional knowledge can be tapped for sustainable development. In traditional African societies, fauna and flora are viewed as ‘companions’ and ‘participants’ and as such, are socially and morally acknowledged as meaningful entities of the society (see Mawere, 2013: 89). In Zimbabwe for instance, those who harm or over exploit the *harurwa*, an edible forest insects, are arrested, tried and convicted by a traditional court (Mawere 2013. : 90). My interaction with some

indigenous Ghanaian female farmers shows that they were interested in enhancing agro-biodiversity through mixed cropping with leguminous trees which enhances soil fertility and regeneration and thus ensuring sustainable use of natural resources. There is empirical evidence across traditional African societies where bans are usually placed on fishing and hunting at certain periods within the year. These bans have been seen to coincide with periods during which fishes lay their eggs and many animals become pregnant. This obviously is the indigenous people's ways of ensuring sustainable use of these natural resources. And it is this kind of knowledge that has been branded as illogical, superstition, useless and thus must be relegated to the background. Here, one is tempted to side with Dubow (2000) when he argues that science has been used among others as 'a direct technique for domination'.

As I have pointed out, I am being mindful of the problem of romanticising indigenous knowledge since there are evidences across Africa where indigenous knowledge and belief practices have impeded the smooth take off of some developing projects. My concern is about the fact that modernisation should not be confused with westernisation (see Mammo, 1999). Modernisation that better provides ways of doing things and improving upon the living condition of the people is a good thing and must be encouraged. The problem has to do with westernization -a wholesale transfer of Western life style to Africa. This is what many of the current crops of African leaders have not been able to distinguish. Our problem now is westernisation which has brushed aside African indigenous epistemologies in favour of those of the West (See Mammo, 1999). Akyeampong (2007) succinctly captures the damage colonialism did to African indigenous knowledge as "Colonial rule in Africa privileged Western Knowledge Systems and discredited Indigenous Knowledge Systems, and provided the context for the fashioning of 'scientific knowledge' about Africa" (Akyeampong, 2007: 173).

Interestingly, many of African elites are aware of the aforementioned potentialities of indigenous African knowledge, therefore, it was not a surprise when with the ushering in of political independence in many parts of Africa, majority of the African Governments vowed to change this impasse and restore their peoples' heritage (Mawere, 2014). Surprisingly, more than three decades after majority of the African countries attained their political independence, not so much have been done to restore the African people's indigenous knowledge; worse still, to integrate indigenous knowledge into the mainstream educational curricular and development projects. What one can be sure of is, political rhetoric -giving lip-service to the continent's pressing issues.

The above phenomenon can be argued to be one of the major root causes of Africa's developmental and sustainability woes. Unfortunately, leadership of the continent has refused to see and acknowledge this simple reality. What makes it very disturbing is the fact that in spite of doubts and cynicism about the potentials of indigenous knowledge system to deal with sustainable use of natural resources and other human challenges, there is a growing body of literature that points to the contrary despite some limitations (Bisong, 1998; Alden-wily *et al.*, 2001; Nolan, 2001; Bisong *et al.*, 2007). There is a chunk of research emphasising that there is no way Africa can develop sustainably without recourse to her indigenous knowledge systems. This notwithstanding, many of the current African leaders continue to adopt and rely on the ways colonial administrators used to extract the continent's natural resources even though this had been detrimental to the continent as it has been revealed and articulated by Cecile Jackson (1994): "Early colonial policies were concerned with securing natural resources for European interests and introduced many environmental policies to achieve this end and [to] regulate usage of natural resources" (cited in Amanor, 2001, p. 64).

One finds it very difficult to comprehend the continent's current predicaments against the backdrop that recent research sees Africa as the cradle of civilization (Ackroyd, 2004: 8, 17; Asante, 2000; see also Mawere, 2014). Is it the case of lack of self-confidence among the current crop of African leaders or what? The over reliance on Western epistemologies (which is modern science-based) coupled with how to balance economic growth against environmental concerns have been the bane of African leaders of today. This difficulty is grounded in the fact that economic considerations are infused in all areas of Africa's political decision-making (see Drazen, 2000).

The Akan of Ghana has a proverb that: *se wo werefi wokurumbene abentia a, woyera wo adwabo ase*. (Lit. anyone who forgets the tune of his or her chief's trumpet/horn gets lost at a durbar). This underscores the fact that any group of people who loses its cultures (indigenous system) does so at its own peril. This is exactly what had or has been happening to Africa. Even some of objective colonial administrators share this view that it is dangerous to lose your culture. Robert Sutherland Rattray, a British soldier cum administrator who lived among the Ashantis of Ghana for more than two decades left an important message for them when he was about to go home. This message appears in a preface to his book, *Ashanti* (1923, 1954, 1959), which I think goes for the current crop of leadership in Africa and in fact, for the entire African race. This message, which I take to be a wake up-call to the African, runs thus:

Guard the national soul of your race and never be tempted to despise your past. Therein I believe lies the sure hope that your sons and daughters will one day make their own original contributions to knowledge and progress (R.S. Rattray, 1954: ix)

Even the UN has observed that 'the basic component of any country's knowledge system is its indigenous knowledge. It

encompasses the skills, experiences and insights of people, applied to maintain or improve their livelihood' (World Bank 1997). That is, scientific knowledge of a given society derives from its local knowledge systems. In spite of burgeoning realisation by some scholars (see Attuquafio and Fobil, 2005) and organisations (World Bank, NGOs) and even politicians alike that indigenous knowledge is intrinsically linked to sustainable development, and also that sophisticated scientific knowledge of the natural world is not confined to Western science(Agrawal, 1995), Africa leadership has yet to wake-up in their deep slumber in the face of compelling evidence on what indigenous knowledge can do in the area of sustainable development (see Wiersum, 2000; Bannister, 2004; Brokensha *et al.* 1980). Although integrating indigenous knowledge in Western scientific knowledge is problematic as Agrawal (1995) has pointed out. There is, however, a lot of research to help surmount the challenges (Berkes, 1999, 2008; Bannister and Hardison, 2006; Leeuwen, 1998).

As a scholar interested in the academic studying of Africa, I have realised that much of the continent's valuable indigenous knowledge about ways of living sustainably are being lost when our knowledge of this matter (indigenous knowledge) is incomplete since many traditional mechanisms are under threat or in a state of collapse while they have not even been studied exhaustively (Battiste and Henderson, 2000; Awuah-Nyamekye, 2009). What this means is that a lot more still needs to be done on the African continent to encourage or even to convince respective governments to adopt indigenous knowledge to foster sustainable development in their communities.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have engaged with issues pertaining to the nuanced meaning of the key terminologies in the chapter title—indigenous knowledge, sustainability and development—have assumed of late. I have given a brief background to the emergence of these terms to their current understandings and usage. The discussion has pointed out the fact that Africa’s developing problems can be attributed to the neglect of African indigenous systems for the wholesale adoption of western epistemologies to African developmental agendas. Not only this but also, the discussion touched on the importance of the use of indigenous knowledge to solving African problems and the challenges associated with such a venture today—refusing to use the local knowledge against growing literature listing the potentials of local knowledge. The anticipated solution does not lie in the abandonment of indigenous knowledge of the continent, which had guided the people to live sustainable life until their encounter with Western civilisation but rather, lies in finding a way to integrate the two models—indigenous and the Western—to tackle pertaining to sustainable development.

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Nyaminyami, ‘The Tonga River-God’: The Place and Role of the Nyaminyami in the Tonga People’s Cosmology and Environmental Conservation Practices

Joshua Chikozho, Tapuwa Raymond Mubaya, and Munyaradzi Mawere

Introduction

In many African communities as elsewhere in the world, religion has always played (and continues to play) a fundamental role in all dimensions governing human existence and “their relationships with other beings” (Mawere 2015: 1). Religion, the world over, is a source of a people’s resilience, hope, peace, war, aspirations and in fact possibly offers all the answers to both earthly and spiritual life. No wonder people like the German economist, Karl Marx (1843), believed that religion is the opium of the people. In his introduction *A contribution to the critique of Hegel’s philosophy of right* written in January 1843, Marx had this to say:

Religious suffering is, at one and the same time, the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people... The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is the demand for their real happiness. To call on them to give up their illusions about their condition is to call on them to give up the condition that requires illusions (pp. i).

While it is largely based on belief, religion arguably transcends all other facets of life grounded on empirical evidence. Indeed, religious beliefs cannot be exposed to scientific appreciation or tests. Nonetheless, nothing is immune to academic appreciation and debate including religion itself. The paradox in human nature and existence is that people have more trust in religion, which is faith-based, than in the scientific appreciation of life which is based on concrete evidence. Vladimir Lenin's (Novaya Zhizn No. 28, Dec 3, 1905) speech on religion in Novaya Zhizn in 1905 is apt in expressing this inherent aspect of religion:

Religion is one of the forms of spiritual oppression which everywhere weighs down heavily upon the masses of the people, overburdened by their perpetual work for other, by want and isolation. Impotence of the exploited classes in their struggle against the exploiters just as inevitably gives rise to the belief in a better life after death as impotence of the savage in his battle with nature gives rise to belief in gods, devils, miracles, and the like. Those who toil and live in want all their lives are taught by religion to be submissive and patient while here on earth, and to take comfort in the hope of a heavenly reward...Religion is the opium of the people. Religion is a sort of spiritual booze, in which the slaves of capital drown their human image, their demand for a life more or less worthy of man (pp. 83-87).

The above testify to the fact that religion remains something shrouded in mystery. Equally, the existence of Nyaminyami popularly qualified as 'the Tonga river-god' remains shrouded in controversy and continuous academic debate in Zimbabwe and beyond. The name Tonga is applied to various groups of Bantu-speaking people inhabiting the peninsula formed by the waters of the lower Kafue and the middle Zambezi (HopGood 1950). The BaTonga people

(heretofore also referred to as the Tonga) in Zimbabwe identify with Nyaminyami. It is equally important to remember that societies change across time and space and so each of the aspects that this chapter describes may not hold for all Tonga communities.

That said, this chapter interrogates the belief in the 'Nyaminyami River-God' as well as the role of the Nyaminyami in the Tonga people's cosmology and environmental conservation practices. Put differently, one is cognisant in such a pursuit, of the fact that religious matters cannot be mathematically accounted for; nonetheless, it is the interest of this chapter to show the influence and impact of Nyaminyami and the environment in which he is found, contributed to Tonga cosmology and cultural identity. The chapter discusses the identity of the Tonga people as perceived by the Tonga themselves before discussing the relationship between the Tonga and their environment. Thereafter, the Nyaminyami is theorised in an attempt to generate more insights and deeper understanding about the Tonga people and their metaphysical cosmology.

The BaTonga people of Zimbabwe

The BaTonga (here referred to as Tonga) people although also largely found in Zambia, Mozambique, and Malawi, among other countries, this chapter specifically focuses on the Zimbabwean Tonga people. This is, nonetheless, not to say the issues discussed here are exclusive to Zimbabwean Tonga people but may be inclusive of the many Tonga people who have inevitably been separated by colonial boundaries thereby falling into different countries today.

The Tonga people of Zimbabwe are found in and around the present day Binga District, Nyaminyami District, areas around Kariba, Hwange, Chirundu, Mola, Victoria Falls, and other parts of Matabeleland. These people are mostly subsistence farmers specialising in upland farming, livestock

rearing, fishing, hunting, and manufacturing (Personal Communication 2013). Their indigenous language is ChiTonga. They are one of the few ethnic groups in Zimbabwe that still hold on to its own cultural beliefs, traditional life styles, survival mechanisms, customs, and ritual practices. This is chiefly because the Tonga people were not under the colonial administration during the colonial period.

The term 'Tonga' is a foreign word given to the people of vast Gwembe Valley by their neighbours (Moreau 1950). The word is arguably an offspring of the verb '*kutonga*' (to rule), yet with reference to the Tonga people it is believed to mean 'a chiefless people' or those who do not recognise a paramount chief. This suggest that before colonialism and the formation of the modern day states (such as Zimbabwe, Zambia, Mozambique, and so on), the Tonga people lived an egalitarian life of hunting and gathering. They are believed to have inhabited the Zambezi Valley since the early Stone Age (Weinrich 1977).

As noted by Weinrich (1977), before the arrival of the Nguni (Ndebele people) in 1855, the Tonga people was a matrilineal people who had not possessed centralised government. After being defeated by the Nguni people, the Tonga people lived in the shores of Lake Nyasa and the banks of Zambezi River.

Like most Bantu ethnic groups, the Zimbabwean Tonga has no oral traditions of origin that mention group migration from a specific homeland outside their present area of settlement (Ncube 2004). Rather, oral traditions collected among the Zimbabwean Tonga show that they knew of no other homeland than the Gwembe Valley (now Zambezi Valley). However, oral traditions collected by Tim Matthews among the plateau Tonga of southern Zambia indicate a general northwesterly migration of the middle Zambezi valley up the escarpment of the plateau. In fact, these oral traditions even suggest a general origin south of the Zambezi River (Ncube 2004).

On the other hand, archaeology indicates that the earliest Tonga or proto-Tonga originated in the northern of Zambia Southern Province Plateau and the adjacent areas of the Kafue Valley. Archaeology thus points to the establishment of Tonga culture in southern Zambia and northern parts of Zimbabwe as a result of the southward spread of the western stream Kangila tradition from the northern area of the BaToka plateau between AD 1000 and 1100 (Ncube 2004). Below is a Zimbabwean map showing the geographical location concentrated by the Tonga people of Zimbabwe:



The link between the Tonga and the environment

The Tonga has a common myth of origin, and of course few tell of originating outside the Zambezi Valley. However,

many tell of symbolic and magical crossings of the river by founding figures. Thus, the centrality of the river is quite apparent; people swore by the river saying ‘by the river’ or ‘by God who gives water’ in Tonga. Munzambwa’s observation is apt:

People would swear by the river because it was a fortune provider to them, it is a holy, God-given river. People associated the good spirits with the river because it is the provider. People never lived far from it; they depended on its fish and flood waters. God would come down and give them food through the river. It was a holy gift and something revered. It provided food like a mother (Munzambwa, M.C pers com 2001).

The Zambezi basin is also commonly referred to as the Gwembe Valley. There was much to make Gwembe life creative and satisfying to its people (Reynolds 1989). Many important shrines and sacred places were dotted along the river which symbolised their spiritual attachment to the river and the marine world. This included family shrines (known as *ntumba or numba*) which were established on their river bank gardens. Most sacred places were pools, all of which had an individual name. This is where supernatural phenomena could be seen or heard, usually taking the form of the sound of invisible people, or grain being pounded, children playing, drums being beaten or cattle lowing (Personal Communication 2014). Similar phenomena are recorded in Mawere *et al*’s (2013), though with reference to the Duma people and the supernatural world around them:

Many places in Duma were sacred. The place was inhabited by apparitions, and sounds would be heard resonating near the hills and rivers. Mermaids accounted for the disappearance of people near sources of water fountains, tributaries and big rivers. The sources of large

rivers in the Duma area like Gande, Mujiche and Mukore were sacred, and ordinary people not visit these places. At times, red, black and white blankets and various types of beads were seen at the sources of these rivers (pp. 1).

Such phenomena exemplify that tangible and intangible cultural aspects especially with reference to African cosmology are seen working in tandem for the good of the community (McGregor 2001).

The Zambezi River basin is located between 8 degrees – 20 degrees S latitude, and 16, 5 degrees – 36 degrees E longitude, draining an area of about 1385 million square kilometres (Chenje 2000). As further noted by Chenje, the basin generally covers about 25 percent of the total area of its eight riparian states, that is, Angola, Botswana, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Tanzania, Zambia and Zimbabwe besides that in the SADC region, the basin is considered as the focal point in terms of energy, wildlife, biodiversity, wetlands, water resources and conservations. Zambia takes up the largest share of the Zambezi Basin with an estimated 41 percent followed by Zimbabwe with 19 percent.

The Zambezi River, southern Africa's longest river, is an important cultural frontier as well as a transport route. The river with its dense network of tributaries and associated ecosystems constitute one of the southern Africa's most important natural resources. The flora of the Zambezian unit is reportedly the richest and most diverse in Africa with more than 6000 species of flowering plants, 650 species of birds and 200 species of mammals (cf. Chenje 2000). Indeed, the basin is rich in diversity, human and natural, social and religion, political economic and ecological.

In view of this background, it is not surprising to note that about 30 ethnic groups are found in the basin with at least a third located in Zambia. Many of the groups are found along at least two national borders sharing common cultural traits and vocabularies even though dialectical differences exist. The

nearly 2700 kilometres long river is the preferred environment for the Lozi of the upper floodplain, the various Tonga groups of the Batoka, Gwembe and Kariba sections of the middle reaches, and the Chikunda, Sena and Undi, Manganja and other southern Maravi groups of the lower sections (Beach 1980; Randles 1979). Most of the people speak languages of the Bantu-lineage. The Zambezi basin is home to about 38.4 million people mainly concentrated in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe (Chenje 2000). The inhabitants of the Gwembe Valley are all Bantu-speaking (Reynolds 1968; Personal Communication 2014).

The Tonga people's self-identity

The Tonga people popularly and affectionately identify themselves as “People of the Great River – *Basilwizi*” (Thomson 2005). In essence, the Zambezi River is the quintessence of Tonga identity, at least for the Zimbabwean Tonga such that it is incomplete to talk of Tonga identity without talking about the Zambezi River and vice-versa. As Reynolds 1989: 5) aptly captures, the people loved their valley, where they said they could live as they liked, and they were proud to call themselves “People of the River”. Strikingly, the name Zambezi reverberates with Tonga ethos and values. The original Tonga name for the Zambezi River is *Kasambabezi*. The name Zambezi is a corruption of the original Tonga name of the river which was *Kasambabezi* and *Kusamba* in Tonga means “to bath” and “*bezi*” means ‘those who know’. In short, *kasambabezi* means only those who know the safe spots on the river can afford to take a bath on the river. Clearly, the Tonga who has a close day to day relationship with the river is empowered by his knowledge of the river and therefore owns it. The river is infested by predators which pose a constant danger to human life and so strangers or foreigners would rather stay away. So while to foreigners the river represented a constant danger, for the Tonga the river is a close natural ‘life

ally' – a natural part of what it means to be Tonga. Put differently, the river is a resource for the Tonga and ironically a predator to strangers. This clearly reflects the intricate and symbiotic relationship of the Tonga and the river; one can hardly separate the two such that we witness the inevitable interplay of nature as represented by the river and culture as represented by human beings.

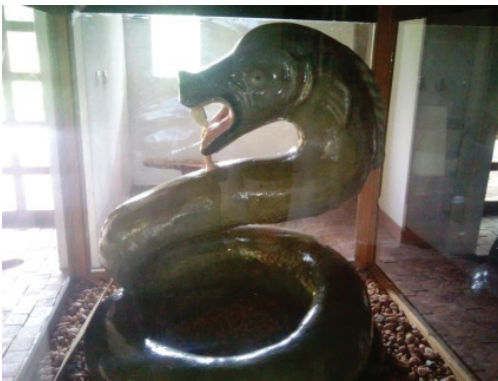
The role the river played (and indeed continues to play) in the lives of the Tonga and the role played by the Tonga in culturalising this natural landmark can never be underestimated. In fact, the life of the Tonga people revolves around and is centred on this resource in many dimensions; economic, socio-political, religious and/or spiritual needs. Yet when the dam construction began at the Kariba Gorge on the Zambezi River in the mid-1950s, little provision was made to rescue the archaeological and anthropological heritage of the areas affected by the flooding (cf. Pikirayi 1999). As such, the story of the Kariba should not only be perceived in the context of colonial exploitations of Africa's natural resources, but also in terms of how a community was disinherited through forced destruction of their livelihoods and ecosystems. This chapter will delve in the religious dimension that characterises the Tonga and the Zambezi River particularly their religious worldview around the Tonga river-god Nyaminyami.

Theorising Nyaminyami, The Tonga River-God

Like all pre-colonial societies in southern Africa, the Tonga had no written history. As such, the most important sources of Tonga history are the people themselves and their oral traditions (Reynolds 1989). Generally, old stories fall into three main categories, namely; history, myths and legends. History describes events we know actually happened, whereas myths and legends, though often repeated by generation after generation, were never actually proven beyond a shadow of a doubt. The difference between legends and myths is that

legends or saga tell the stories of heroes and their heroic actions, whereas myths tell the stories of creatures, divine beings and gods and how they came to be (www.enntech.com/water-mythology.htm). In this sense, myths are like fairy tales told to young children. Water plays an important role in many legends and myths. The *midzimu*, spirits of departed ancestors, are believed to be constantly impinging on the life of the living (HopGood 1950). However, alongside this ancestor worship is a very definite belief in the existence of one Supreme Being.

There is no doubt that the spiritual attributes accorded to the Zambezi River especially by the Tonga people in Zimbabwe make the river more than just a river. This worldview is not exclusive to the Tonga people; rivers and river gods were important features in Greek mythology. Rivers were often personified, and in this capacity river gods often contributed to myth and legend (www.mythography.com/myth/mythology-river-gods/). As a matter of fact, for most societies living along the Zambezi, the river had an indomitable spiritual significance which is epitomised in the Tonga river-god Nyaminyami also known as the Zambezi River God or Zambezi Snake Spirit as here below:



*Figure 2: Nyaminyami cast in BaTonga Museum
(Source: BaTonga Museum)*

The above entails that according to the Tonga epistemological and metaphysical beliefs, what one may see as just a river or a physical landmark, is not just so in the lives of the Tonga, rather the river is a symbol and embodiment of life and sacred home of their river-god. Nyaminyami is believed to protect the Tonga people and give them sustenance in times of need such as during famine, droughts and wars (Zambezi.com 2007).

Two major schools content with regards to the existential nature of Nyaminyami. One school argues that Nyaminyami is a mythical figure, that is, a figment of imagination while the other school believes Nyaminyami is a living reality that served and continues to serve, more importantly, the spiritual welfare of the Tonga. It is important to note that a water deity is a deity in mythology associated with water or various bodies of water. Water deities are common in mythology and were usually more important amongst civilisations in which the sea or ocean, or a great river was more important (en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/List-of-water-deities).

Given the conflicting and sometimes contradictory and diverse views on the Nyaminyami, it is critical for this chapter to trace the genesis of this deity. It is important to take cognisance of the fact that the first whites who could write and interacted with the Tonga were unable to meaningfully grasp and pronounce Tonga language. As such, a lot of corruption was visited on many Tonga names and words. According to a research carried out by the BaTonga Community Museum in both Binga and Nyaminyami Districts, there is general unanimity that the original name for Nyaminyami is *Simwaaba* which literally means ‘a provider or one who shares with others’ (BaTonga Museum file 2007). Oral tradition argues that the word *Simwaaba* was corrupted to *Nyamanyama* which was also eventually corrupted to Nyaminyami. According to local folklore, during times of drought the Tonga people had free access to his flesh and were thus sustained by removing strips of meat from his body (<http://us.f634.mail.yahoo.com/ym/>). All

interviews carried out throughout Nyaminyami and Binga districts attest to the fact that Nyaminyami is a living reality to the people living in Zambezi Valley, the Tonga particularly. This realism is evidenced by other names given to Nyaminyami by other riverine ethnic groups who referred to Nyaminyami as *Jekawacheka*, *Jekerapo*, *Jekausiye*, or *insikabayitshiye* all of which connote the key characteristic of Nyaminyami, which is providing plentifully for his people. It is evidently clear from all the descriptive names given to Nyaminyami that his role as a god who provides was very clear for all. He provides plentiful meat to relieve people of their hunger during times of drought. Without being blasphemous, this story is reminiscent of the biblical mana from heaven incident when the Israelites had virtually no food in as they were passing through a desert. Nyaminyami and the stories about him defy time, a clear indication of the ultimate impact he had on the riverine Tonga people (BaTonga Museum file, 2007). Interestingly, like most spiritual or divine figures, the exact identity of Nyaminyami cannot be pinned down. Nevertheless, it is strongly held that Nyaminyami has a fish-like head and snake-like torso. Even so, it remains difficult for anyone to claim that it is one thing or the other. Indeed, this is in tandem with most religious icons whose identity is mystical, supernatural, sophisticated and or exaggerated.

Far from pre-occupying themselves with and pinning down the identity of Nyaminyami, the Valley Tonga strongly believed in Nyaminyami and that he protected riverine communities to ensure that there is sustainability in the area. In turn the people pledged their allegiance by committing shrines (*intumba*) along the banks of the river and performing ritual ceremonies in honour of Nyaminyami.

The creation of the Kariba dam wall on the Zambezi River which is widely regarded as a development resulting in the generation of hydro-electric power is ironically regarded as a desecration visited on the lives and culture of the Tonga people. In the worldview of the Tonga people, Nyaminyami

controls life in the Zambezi River and they strongly believe that anyone hampering its natural flow would be punished. As a consequence, in the days when the Tonga were forcibly removed from the Zambezi Valley and resettled in the uplands, the name of Nyaminyami was invoked in a spirit of resistance and it was widely believed that the river spirit disapproved of the construction of the dam and would destroy it (Ncube 2004). When construction of the dam started in 1957, the Tonga waited for Nyaminyami to strike it down. For two successive years, devastating floods hurled unprecedented volumes of water at the incomplete dam and twice threatened to obliterate it, precisely as the Tonga had predicted. It is widely believed that Nyaminyami was infuriated by the construction of the dam wall and desecration of the river and is credited with having attempted to destroy the Kariba dam twice during the record floods of 1957 and 1958, resulting in the collapse of part of the dam wall during constriction and the death of several workers (Ncube 2004) including those of European descendants. After the 1957 flood, many locals nodded in contentment and knowingly, appreciating Nyaminyami's power and waiting for the final destruction of the dam.

In 1958, the floods greatly exceeded those of the previous year because of local flooding and flooding from the upper reaches of the Zambezi in Zambia which coincided and struck the dam wall simultaneously. Tonga elders today claim that only their intervention saved the dam and placated the river spirit. At the same time, it is widely believed that Nyaminyami promised that the Tonga will one day go back to their ancestral home, that is to say one day the dam wall will collapse and the people will go back where they were staying before the construction of the dam wall. In Kariba, occasional earth tremors arguably from the load of the lake on the earth's surface are often experienced and the Tonga claim that at the time of the sealing of the dam wall Nyaminyami was philandering downstream towards Mana Pools. He is now very

lonely and only the destruction of the dam will reunite him with his wife (<http://us.f634.mail.yahoo.com/ym/>).

It is important to note that like in most African traditional religion, the Tonga believed in ancestors, spirit mediums, gods and The Most High God. There is often a misconception in some quarters to think that the Tonga believed in Nyaminyami as their final God. The fact of the matter is that Nyaminyami is not the Most High God; he is simply a river-deity. A river-deity in the African cosmos is essentially an ancestral spirit however higher than human ancestral spirits. The Most High God in Tonga is called '*Leza*'; who the Tonga believed is the God who controls all things, the Tonga worship and revere him (Colson 1948). The ancestors, spirit mediums, river-god are simply mediums that link the earthly and spiritual realms as humans strive to communicate with God. It is not easy to accurately assess the exact connotation the Tonga give to the name *Leza*. Whether they always think of *Leza* as a personal being in the fullest sense of the term may be open to question. But whatever else the term may or may not connote, it certainly has behind it the notion of a 'Great First Cause' (HopGood 1950: 62). Five other names commonly given to *Leza* include; *Cilenga*, *Syampanga*, *Nalulenga*, *Syatwaakwe* and *Nacanza* and all these names simply refer to the Creator of all things.

Some researchers have suggested that while many aspects of this story are based strictly in legend, its foundation may be rooted in truth (www.unknownexplorers.com/nyaminyami.php). Numerous fishermen have reportedly witnessed a large scaly, snake like creature with a head resembling that of a fish. Others have reported sightings of gigantic, almost whale like, hump backed animal in the centre of the lake. At the same time, other reports have included descriptions of a gigantic, freshwater porpoise dwelling in the depths of Lake Kariba. The discussion becomes more interesting considering that researchers who believe that the Legend of Nyaminyami is based on the sightings of an actual creature have gone on to postulate that these creatures

may be an extremely large specimen of African catfish known as the Vudu, which is thought to average seventy eight pounds (www.unknownexplorers.com/nyaminyami.php). In a bid not to be outcompeted, another theory suggests that these animals may well be descendants of a snake like prehistoric predator known as the Basilosaurus, which lived from 40-37 million years ago and is described as having a streamlined body, averaging 45 to 70 feet in length.

From the foregoing discussion it is apparent that should the Nyaminyami Legend prove to be based off sightings of a real creature, either of the aforementioned theories could possibly be correct. It is also conceivable that the animal which dwells in Lake Kariba is completely a new species which remains unknown to science to this day. Nonetheless, some critics remain adamant that the Nyaminyami is nothing more than a manifestation of the local ethnic groups to explain mysterious happenings in the river and lake (www.unknownexplorers.com/nyaminyami.php). This criticism is anchored on the fact that to date, there is no physical evidence to support the existence of an animal like Nyaminyami living in the waters of Lake Kariba. Furthermore, no documented sightings of Nyaminyami could be located.

Be that as it may, over time, diverse theories about Nyaminyami have also evolved and today three major theories prevail:

■ *One Nyaminyami*

This appears the most ancient school. Proponents of this school hold that there is only one Nyaminyami, the Tonga river-god who patrolled the Zambezi River and provided for his people in times of need. The creation of the dam wall across the river limited his mobility and influence and at the same time desecrated his 'home' thereby angering and weakening his power and relevance to a great extent.

■ *Two Nyaminyamis – husband and wife*

This is currently the most locally persuasive school since it is most commonly used to explain earth tremors oftenly experienced at and around the Kariba dam wall. The theory subscribes to the idea that there are two Nyaminyami; husband and wife. It is the contention of this theory that for many years Nyaminyami and his wife stayed safely at ‘*Kaliba*’ gorge now known as Kariba; the place that was their home. But as fate would have it, one season when Nyaminyami (the husband) had gone upstream and the wife downstream to attend to the riverine people’s prayers and bless them, the white man came to build a dam wall thereby separating the two.

This effectively meant the desecration of the river which was the sacred home to Nyaminyami and his wife. Indeed, it took five long years to see it through because; as common belief would have it, Nyaminyami was against this desecration of his sacredness. As a result, he caused some floods and loss of more than 80 human lives during the construction of the dam wall. It was only the work of Tonga elders and medium spirits to persuade the Nyaminyami to allow the Zambezi to be tamed. However, the occasional earth tremors felt in the lake surroundings are caused by this spirit.

■ *A Family of Nyaminyami(s)*

Followers of this school strongly hold that Nyaminyami has a wife and naturally they have children. The number of children is, however, unknown. The creation of the dam wall tore this family apart. Whatever the number, Nyaminyami essentially served the same purpose and had the same qualities as detailed in the aforementioned theories. The creation of the lake sadly disintegrated this family thereby weakening the powers of the Nyamininyami. Nonetheless, a promise remains that one day the dam wall shall collapse leading to the reunification of the Nyaminyami family and most importantly the rehabilitation of the Tonga physically, socially and spiritually.

It is difficult to ascertain and in fact identify oneself with any one school. Ascertaining the numerical status of Nyaminyami remains an academic labyrinth worth further research. What is cardinal, nevertheless, is that, no matter to which school one subscribes, the role and significance of Nyaminyami in the lives of the Tonga is never contradicted, rather it is basically told from a shared spiritual perspective.

Yet, while there are many schools trying to explain the Nyaminyami, basing on our findings, it should be underscored that the Tonga people understand the Nyaminyami not as a God but a Tonga spirit medium. The various literatures that describe the Nyaminyami as the Zambezi River-God or Zambezi snake spirit, thus, should be corrected as it is clearly a misrepresentation of the Tonga metaphysical thinking. In fact, the Tonga people, like many other African ethnic groupings, believed (and some still believe) that unlike themselves, their ancestors had the privilege to speak with God such that they would plead with God to intervene whenever there was calamity or misfortune among the people. The Tonga people, even though they could not speak directly with God, would not pray to the Nyaminyami as like many other African ethnic groupings, they always believed in one omnipresent, omnipotent and omniscient God (Personal Communications 2013). Far from the misconceptions of many, the Tonga people worshipped and spoke to God through one of their prominent spirit mediums, the Nyaminyami who until the damming of the Zambezi at Kariba is believed to have been residing along the Zambezi River Gorge. Thus the worshipping of God through the Nyaminyami should not be mistaken to mean that the Tonga people worshipped the Nyaminyami who besides being their prominent spirit medium was also their intercessor.

The Nyaminyami walking stick

In a world in which Nyaminyami is remote and whose power has also been greatly subdued, the Nyaminyami walking stick stands out as the most immediate artistic expression of the unmistakable devotional spirituality of the Tonga. It is the embodiment and epitome of the quintessence of Tonga life no wonder it is deliberately designed to reflect on all the pillars of Tonga culture and is a highly priced cultural object. The Tonga people believe in Nyaminyami, the spirit that personifies the Zambezi River, their life force, and their will to survive. It is the Tonga spirit of resistance whom they believed disapproved of the White men's schemes on the Zambezi and their [White men] nefarious derogatory project of castigating the Tonga metaphysical worldviews to the dustbin of oblivion. For this reason, Main (1990: 124) argues that "it is hard [...] to ignore completely the superstitions of the local people and to disregard their belief in Nyaminyami". Even today, the story of Nyaminyami is still powerful to anyone who visits the Kariba, with its symbolism being retained in the form of a wood carving. Below is a picture of the Nyaminyami walking stick:



Figure 3: Nyaminyami Walking Stick

(Source: Rainos Tawonameso, The original Nyaminyami walking stick designer)

We should emphasise here as rightfully noted by Mkandawire (2015) that the Nyminyami walking stick is not a Tonga creation but an artistic impression created by an extremely talented carver named Rainos Tawonameso who does not even belong to the Tonga ethnic group but is originally from Bikita District of Masvingo Province. He calls the Nyaminyami Walking Stick, a ‘historical stick’ detailing the Tonga people’s worldviews as he perceived based on the Tonga people’s mythology and philosophy of life. Tawonameso’s stick, which he launched in 1986 is registered with the Patent and Designs Office in Harare yet it continues to influence and perpetuate the misconception that the Nyaminyami is a monster snake, two hundred metres long.

As further noted by Mkandawire, and rightly so, another correction to be made on the misconception about the Nyaminyami pertains to the Walking Stick of the Nyaminyami

River-God. Basing on his researches with the Tonga people, Mkandawire argues that it is a misconception that the Nyaminyami has the head of a fish and a body of a snake as it is very clear from the Tonga people's folklore that no one has ever seen the Nyaminyami in his full glory. Even during the *Jama Kutendwa*, as the gift from Nyaminyami was called, it is said that the Nyaminyami would only expose a portion of its body for people to cut meat in times of need before it submerges and move on to the next recipient village to offer its life sustaining gift. The Nyaminyami, thus, never exposed itself in full.

We add, basing on our findings, that if Nyaminyami was a monster snake, then the 'snake's benevolence explained above would be too generous for a true monster. One remains inquisitive as to how a monster could be this generous, offering the portion of its body for people to cut and feed on it during times of need! We therefore argue that anthropological studies around the true nature of the Nyaminyami and the worldviews of the Tonga people are more urgent than ever if the true cultural image and identity of the Tonga is to be re-established and preserved.

Conclusion

From the preceding discussion, a number of things stand out clearly. The existence of Nyaminyami in the lives of the Tonga people and the benevolent phenomenon associated with this river-god, for example, are critically examined to determine if the current treatment of the Tonga culture and worldview is a true one.

We have carefully noted that while the physical existence of this deity is a subject of debate, it is apparent that the benevolent phenomenon associated with him is a reality to all the riverine people known to him. Indeed, this explains why we have different names for Nyaminyami in other languages as already alluded to by this chapter. So, although he is popularly

known as the Tonga river-god his influence is not strictly confined to the Tonga people. In essence, he is a god for all the Zambezi riverine people and the Tonga formed the bulky of these people on the Zimbabwean side.

Worth emphasising is the wider influence of Nyaminyami beyond the realm of Tonga cultural life which in itself is sufficient persuasion to the realism and existence of this deity or spirit medium so to speak. Clearly, he is not a god for the river or for his own sake; rather he is a spirit medium and intercessor for the people, for the community. The role of Nyaminyami in this context should never be underestimated. He is the symbiotic medium through which the natural (river) and the cultural (people) interface. It is the integration of the tangible and intangible values; a dialectical process in which on one hand the people's culture and identity are shaped by the environment while on the other hand the environment is culturalised and breathed life into by the community. This critical harmony and synergy sustains both the environment and the people in equal scale. Although it is steeped in tradition, this argument is equally scientifically true. As such, tradition does not necessarily translate to unscientific rather this chapter advances that the terms are synonymous. In general, Tonga culture largely and profusely exhibits a high sense of appreciation of the environment and this chapter is one way this relationship is demonstrated.

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Chapter 11

Depiction of Polygamous Marriage in Selected Pre-colonial Shona Narratives

Liveson Tatira

Introduction

This chapter examines the depiction of polygamous marriage in the pre-colonial narratives which are also referred interchangeably to as romances and Old World Novels in the discussion. An interrogation of the romances shows that the depiction of polygamous marriage is tainted with negativity. The men involved in polygamous marriage are portrayed as ruthless in their acquisition of women. The Shona chiefs are portrayed abusing their power, especially in the process of adding one wife after another. They risk the lives of their fighters as they wage fierce battles in order for them to capture women they want to marry.

In some instances, a polygamous man is depicted in a very unrealistic way, he is very weak administratively, drunkard, lazy and violent. All the expected attributes of a polygamous man are negated. The issue that polygamous marriage served a functional purpose in the pre-colonial period is not reflected and at worst distorted. The chapter, therefore, argues that the stereotypical unfavourable depiction of polygamous marriage in the Shona narratives is meant to serve a purpose. The narrative writers seem to be on a calculated mission of demonising polygamy in order to scare off readers who might be cherishing the practice. The writers might be feeding on the colonial myth that considers pre-colonial Shona marriage as deficit in moral values. The colonialists, through their writings about the Shona marriage, want Shona people to believe that

prior to colonialism, they led a chaotic life, which illicitly begged for a colonial redemption.

The narratives that are going to be discussed in this chapter are Chakaipa's *Pfumo reropa* (1961) Mugugu's *Jekanyika* (1968), Mutswairo's *Feso* (1956) and Zvarevashe's *Kurauone* (1976). The just foresaid narratives have been chosen because they cover pre-colonial period with marriage as one of their prominent theme. This does not mean to say that the four Old World Novels are the only narratives that are found in Shona literature, but they are selected with the view that they can adequately represent others.

This chapter, therefore, contends that as the romance writers write their stories, they take events out of their historical contexts and analyse them from a Western perspective. They then embark on a crusade of educating people through fiction on their perceived evils of polygamous marriages. Hence a distorted picture of a polygamous marriage is created as will be discussed in this chapter.

The distorted image of a polygamous Gararirimo in Kurauone

In the narrative, *Kurauone* (1976), the family head, Gararirimo (One who is always intoxicated), has five wives. The whole narrative is a chronicle of domestic violence, be it verbal, psychological or physical. Gararirimo, whom society expects and demands to be of strong character in order for him to be able to administer effectively a polygamous marriage, is hopelessly weak. Gararirimo is crafted in two unconvincing and irreconcilable images. He is a hopeless drunkard, yet on one hand, is a prosperous farmer (*hurudzwa*). Industriousness and drunkenness are irreconcilable characteristics of one personality. In any case, the period covered by *Kurauone* (1976) is a period that was conspicuously unknown for the existence of alcohol abusers as epitomised by Gararirimo. Beer was not readily available. The abuse of beer came with colonial times

when beer was commercialised (Kahari, 1972). Prior to the colonial era, beer was used for other purposes such as socialisation and ritual ceremonies like rain-petitioning (*mukweerera sing. <mikweerera, pl.>*) (Mawere 2013). In support of the above, Bourdillon (1993: 48) observes:

The problems of excessive consumption of alcohol are relatively new to Zimbabwean society... Traditional beer took seven days to brew, and was only brewed for specific occasions. Excessive drunkenness was not a problem because there was no excess to be drunk. On most days, no beer was available at all ...Commercialisation of beer made it regularly available plentiful in supply. This triggered regular and excessive drinking among the Shona people.

If Gararirimo is such a hopeless drinker, he could not have managed to marry as many wives as he did. He is given wives in exchange for food because he is a hard worker who produces more than his family requires. He thus scolds his wives:

Kurumidza kubuda! Imbwa dzavanhu! Kunetswa
nevana vezviremwaremwa zvaigara

Mumapako! Vana vamadzibambo andakaponesa
munzara!/
Move out quickly! You dogs! You give me problems,

you daughters of the people,
the parents of whom I helped, when there was
starvation, by marrying you in exchange of food.

The above quotation, like many other contacts Gararirimo has with his wives shows that he is maladjusted as he always scolds them. In the above quotation, he calls his wives *imbwa* (dogs) and *vana vezviremwaremwa* (children of destitutes). The use of such images in traditional African marriage points to a malfunctioning union. Gararirimo's actions are symptomatic of

a man who is crushing under the stress of polygamy. The domestic quarrel sucks in the in-laws who are made reference to as poor people. Gararirimo fails to amicably solve his problems with his wives.

The weak spot of Gararirimo is that he lacks administrative skills required to run a polygamous marriage. He is depicted as a person who openly takes sides with his favourite wife, Nyachide (The favourite one). The name implies that the character is the most loved person and obviously the most favoured. Gararirimo is painted with a black brush throughout the romance. He deprives all other wives of their conjugal relationship except Nyachide. This neglect and discrimination in the application of matrimonial duty is deplorable in the African culture, as Jeater (1993: 16), comments:

Sexual gratification is required as a basic need in married life. A husband is expected to have frequent sex and regular intercourse with his wife, and in a manner which leaves her satisfied ... Wilful neglect of wife's sexual need is considered so seriously that she may decide to bring an action against the husband before a tribal court.

As though this is not enough, at one point Gararirimo accuses his wives of bewitching him without any traditional evidence on which to base his accusation. Traditionally, divination could have been the basis of such accusation (Gelfand, 1973). Gararirimo defies custom by paying *lobola* for the stepson, Togarasei, the son of his favourite wife. The name, Togarasei, expresses dissatisfaction. It is a verbal protest of what is happening in the family as evidenced by Gararirimo favouring both Nyachide and her son Togarasei. Gararirimo pays *lobola* for Togarasei at the expense of his own son. VaMandinyeya (You gossip about me) thus complains:

Kwakaroorwa vanasikana vangu vaviri kwakabva
n'ombe idzodzo dzoroodzwa

Mubvandiripo Togarasei ndizvo here? Madzivo
naRwauya havacharoori?

Kurauone (40)/

There are two beasts which were paid when my daughters got married, but these beasts are used as lobola for Togarasei, a step child, is this fair? Is it that [my own sons], Madzivo and Rwauya are not going to marry.

The actions of Gararirimo are not only unfair but negate Shona cultural norms and values from which the setting and characterization in the novel *Kurauone* are cantered. It is not only taboo but inconceivable that a husband disposes cattle paid as part of *lobola* to settle a step son's bride-wealth.

Gararirimo is also a highly temperamental person such that at one point he interrogates his wives while wielding an axe. The interrogation episode turns into a circus in which he attempts or threatens to axe his wives. The circus ends when he divorces, VaMandinyeya (You gossip about me), his senior wife. Divorcing the first wife shows Gararirimo's immaturity. On the phenomenon of divorcing a senior wife, Maillu (1988: 9) notes, "African civilisation considers it both inhuman and a mark of immaturity to victimise the first wife by way of divorce"

There is nothing of substance in Gararirimo's character. He becomes a laughing stock and therefore, a poorly conceived representative of a traditional Shona man in a polygamous union. This makes *Kurauone* a grossly inaccurate representation of a polygamous marriage in the pre-colonial past or even the colonial and post-colonial periods. There is absolutely nothing positive about the marriage.

The author, Zvarevashe, consolidates his attack on polygamy by repeating through different characters that "*barika rakaipa*" (polygamy is bad) as on pages (3, 28, 29-30, 107 and

110). We are left with no choice except to agree with Chinua Achebe who, in Stratton (1994: 23), notes, "... stories are not innocent; that they can be used to put you in the wrong crowd..." A story struggles to put its readers into a certain mind-set; in this case that of monogamy.

The negative depiction of polygamous marriage is probably because Zvarevashe wants to prove that it is not only bad but a bundle of vices. The message is loud and clear, 'take polygamy at your peril.' Zvarevashe, not surprisingly, as a priest, extends the pulpit into fiction.

The marriage seems to have been uprooted from its pre-colonial background and attacked from a Greco-Roman tradition. As a result, there is a lot of acrimony in the marriages depicted.

Acrimony in the Shona Polygamous Marriage

All polygamous marriages depicted in *Pfumo reropa* (1961), *Jekanyika* (1968) and *Kurauone* (1976) are characterised by acrimony. In *Pfumo reropa* (1961), Ndyire's marriage is slightly stable as compared to other polygamous marriages. This is so probably because Ndyire's marriage's life span is short. He prematurely dies of food poisoning in the romance. The fact that Ndyire dies of a poison from another wife, the poison is intended to kill a junior wife, Munhamo, reveals that things are not well. The name VaMunhamo (Always in trouble) shows that the character is always in trouble. Her life is full of misfortunes. After Ndyire kills her husband she is forced to marry him. She stays with Ndyire for a brief period before he dies. Munhamo then marries for the third time. The husband is very lazy and abusive. He beats her and lets her toil for long hours alone in the fields. She is subsequently killed in a gruesome way by one of her husband's wife.

In *Kurauone*, the whole family is destroyed because of jealousy of Gararirimo's wives, and his inaptness to deal with conflicts which arise in a polygamous marriage. However, in

Jekanyika there is no direct acrimony. This might be so because the central figure, Dendera, is always fighting his rivals. The theme drifts to the depiction of problems, which arise as a result of exile marriage.

Chiefs are depicted as people who abuse power when it comes to marital issues. This motif runs across the Old World Novels investigated in this chapter. The detail of this abuse is discussed in the section which follows.

Chiefs' Abuse of Power in Shona Marriage

There is a deliberate attempt by the writers to show that the chiefs, before the coming of Europeans, abused their powers when they married. Ndyire, in *Pfumo reropa*, kills people in order that he takes their wives because he is a sexual maniac. Why Ndyire resorts to the brutal killing of people when his office and wealth could have benefited him from traditional socially acceptable marriage is not convincing. The chief might have been shown in such a manner in order to point out that pre-colonial chiefs abused power and that the Europeans' coming to Africa, in this case to Zimbabwe, was a blessing to the Africans. Such a thrust was acceptable and favourable to the Rhodesia Literature Bureau which was controlled by the Europeans, as they wanted such views disseminated to Africans in an attempt to shape their perceptions about themselves as Africans and in so doing consolidating European power to rule. Therefore, for the Rhodesia Literature Bureau, a publishable romance should depict Shona marriage which was at tangent with peaceful coexistence that cries for a European intervention to instil a semblance of sanity in Shona marriages and their lives in general.

Chief Nyamombe in *Feso* (1956) sends his chief advisor-cum-commander general to Pfumojena's territory where Feso runs away with Chipochedenga. Chief Mupambawashe in *Jekanyika* fights a ruthless battle against Chipezvero in order for

him to take Chipezvero's daughter as his wife. Chief Godzi in the same novel fights Chaitezvi in order to abduct women.

However, it should be noted that there is no chief in Shona history, even in the rest of African history, who organised wars to fight another chief solely in order for him to capture women. In African history, without me being accused of being a male chauvinist, the women were spoils of the war and not the subject of war. No single sane chief would obviously have risked the lives of his soldiers as well as risking himself losing the throne through defeat, for the sole reason of acquiring beautiful women. In any case, women were not in short supply, taking cognizance of the fact that more men than women died in territorial wars in the pre-colonial period. A Southern African Native Affairs Commission Report on the demographic imbalances among the pre-colonial Zimbabwean, in Jeater (1993: 4), has the following to say:

Tribal wars have killed off the men, both of the invading tribe and the country invaded, and there was left a greater proportion of women than men. Even to this day females in Zimbabwe outnumber males. Census statistics done every ten years bear testimony to this.

The picture which, however, emerges is that in pre-colonial marriages, the use of military strength was the order of the day. There was no room for negotiations in marriage. The situation is pathetic, to say the least, as almost all the marriages were accompanied by individual force or military attacks.

There also seems to be a convergence of perception among the authors on their depiction of marriage in the Shona romances as will be demonstrated in the ensuing paragraphs.

Convergence of Perceptions on Shona Marriage in the Old World Novels

Across the narratives studied, all the Shona writers seem to have a stereotypical perception that pre-colonial marriage was chaotic and that a polygamous marriage is problematic, thus not a proper arrangement. The tone right across the romances is that of despair and begs readers to desist and abhor marriages depicted in the romances. The novels show no convincing reasons why characters engage in polygamous marriage except in *Kurauone* (1976).

Zvarevashe seems to be the only novelist who deviates from others to show why such marriages existed, and he should be commended for this. Though he does this in passing, he should be applauded for having shown a justification for polygamous marriage. In this novel, we see polygamous marriage playing an important role of assisting poor families who give Gararirimo women in exchange for food. When angry with his wives, Gararirimo touches on this issue of giving food to desperate parents who in turn give him wives as previously demonstrated in this chapter. This traditional way of marrying was popular during the pre-colonial period which the author captures, and it is legitimate to capture it.

Unlike Zvarevashe, other Old World novel writers like Chakaipa's *Pfumo reropa* (1961) and Mugugu's *Jekanyika* (1968), project characters that enter into polygamous marriages mostly as a result of lust on the part of male characters as previously discussed in this chapter. Marriage becomes a figment of the colonialists, missionaries and explorers which is driven only by the male sexual instinct. Marriage happens in the narratives discussed; it does not take place in reality. Marriage happens mostly through violence of war. There is absence of traditional factors which lead to the popularity of the polygamous marriage. Such marriages are depicted as manifesting in a vacuum without any cause except that they are lust driven.

However, it is common knowledge that marriage, like any other forms of cultural institution, is responsive to socio-economic conditions. In pre-colonial past, production was labour intensive and polygamy was the answer. People needed large families in order for them to increase food production and therefore they married many wives. Chiefs also liked big families so as to consolidate their strength. The more family members one had, the stronger the individual became in an environment which largely depended on numbers and physical strength for survival. The Shona proverb "*Kuwanda huuya museve wakapotera pamuzukuru*" (To be many is desirable, for many can share a problem) is a testimony to the fact that the Shona appreciated large families. Marriage had also a spiritual dimension, one had to marry because procreation made the ancestral spirits happy. The propagation of the ethnic groups meant that the ancestral spirits would continue to be remembered by the living generations.

Traditionally, a polygamous marriage sometimes was born out of a crisis. The crisis might be a result of hunger or a serious offence. The well- to- do would be given a woman in exchange for food in times of hunger; or the aggrieved part would demand a wife as settlement for the crime committed (Holleman, 1952; Hall, 1901; Gelfand, 1965; Chigwedere, 1982). Therefore, pre-colonial marriages were functional, yet romance writers present them out of this context.

Conclusion

The Old World Novel writers in this discussion might have used material from folktales to build their stories. This perspective is generally unquestionable. What is also worth noting when critiquing these romances is that the writers were also influenced by the socio-historical factors. In crafting their stories, the romance writers were undoubtedly influenced by the colonial environment in which they operated in. This

environment included schools, church, commerce and industry, to mention a few.

The authors consciously and unconsciously propagated the colonial myth of an uncomplimentary African past. The anthropological perception of Africans, as a people in pursuit of perpetual evil and ready to fight each other, cuts across narratives. The pre-colonial past is depicted negatively; marriage is associated with violence, be it at the initial stage or during the stage of living together as a family.

Women are depicted as being acquired rather than married. The marriage itself is characterised by acrimony. Marriage is always on a slippery anthill (Griffiths, 2000). It is dissolved at any time, mostly in a gruesome manner. The thrust seems to be on civilising the younger generation, scare them of their past and assist them in moving forward (Mutiso, 1974).

There is no successful polygamous marriage whatsoever in the Old World Novels discussed, hence the practice is condemned right, left and centre. In most cases, the full background to polygamous marriage or to African traditional marriage in general is not given except in *Kurauone* (1976). Marriage takes place because of the chief's uncontrollable sexual desires, or because the chief admires the women's beauty. Love driven merely by beauty, and marrying someone simply because she is beautiful is a Western colonial invention. There was more to consider than beauty alone in marriage in traditional Shona society than what is captured in the romances. In fact, the Shona people were distrustful of very beautiful people, hence the proverb "*Matende mashava huvazya doro*." (Deceptively beautiful women spoil marriage.), and "*Mukadzi munaku akasaba anoroya*" (A beautiful woman should not be trusted or an outward appearance should be taken with caution). Therefore, a person like Ndyire in *Pfumo reropa* (1961), who is obsessed with women's beauty, might be a result of the author's modern sensibilities. These sensibilities of extolling beauty were ushered, promoted and encouraged by the colonial

government through the introduction of beauty contests. Females were paraded and judged to be beautiful or not.

The depiction of Shona marriage before the Europeans came to Zimbabwe has largely been influenced by factors such as how the Literature Bureau operated, the schools the writers went to and the new religious belief of Christianity that novelists adopted. All the just foresaid, lumped together, largely influenced how the romance writers perceive Shona marriage in particular and Shona culture in general. The perception of marriage, which is evident in this discussion, is largely negative. As a result of this negative perception, the narrative writers project Shona marriages which are far and wide apart from those that prevailed during the pre-colonial period.

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Living a Sustainable Life: African and Old Testament Proverbs in Dialogue

Kojo Okyere and Vincent Assanful

Introduction

Many scholars (Awuah-Nyamakye, 2012; Jean-Pierre, 2013; Weiskel, 1973) have observed that traditional societies usually relate positively to the environment. The premium placed on life and communal living by such societies has always been seen to be crucial in sustaining their existence. However, because their epistemology went contrary to Western scientific reasoning, the knowledge base of traditional societies was branded as unscientific, and accordingly unreliable for development practice. As a vision of ideas of how change in society is best achieved, development theory and practice (such as growth, dependency and structural adjustment theories) (Rapley, 2007) undergirded by Western scientific thought was championed as the key to unlocking the doors of underdevelopment which characterised many societies in Africa.

Consequently, since independence in Africa, many countries such as Ghana and Nigeria have modelled their development agenda in line with Western based patterns (Killick, 2010; Olusanya, Ate, & Olukoshi, 1988). Although mindful of the wisdom inherent in the traditional values and practices, African leaders largely failed to integrate traditional concepts into the so-called modern development practice. Admittedly, some successes were chalked, evident in the area of technology, medicine, and infrastructure. But the failures too cannot be ignored (Haverkort, 2007). Particularly alarming

was the realisation that Western development practice, with its emphasis on economic growth, was largely responsible for the economic inequalities, and the increasing ecological problems the world is facing (Norgaard, 1994; White, 1967). The need for a paradigm shift in development theory and practice became not only urgent, but also imperative. When the concept of sustainable development was popularised in 1987, through the Brundtland Report, many hailed it as a better alternative to the existing growth-oriented development models. Conceptualised as the development that meets the needs of today without compromising the needs of future generations (Kendie & Martens, 2008), sustainable development was attractive because of its boldness in addressing the nexus between the social, ecological, and economic dimensions of development (Robinson, 2004). Unlike previous debates which centred on whether development and environment concerns contradicted each other, sustainable development revolutionised the debate to how development can be achieved by not compromising the welfare of the environment and societies (Lélé, 1991). More so, sustainable development was not only concerned with the present, but also looked to the future.

With some few years into the introduction of sustainable development, it became the mantra of development practitioners and theorists. In the words of Lélé (1991: 607):

SD has become the watchword for development planners, the theme of conferences and learned papers, and the slogan of developmental and environmental activists. It appears to have gained the broad-base support that earlier development concepts ... lacked, and is poised to become the developmental paradigm of the 1990s.

Upon close observation, however, the principle of this newly found paradigm had always been present among traditional societies (Awuah-Nyamekye, 2009; 2012; Mawere,

2014). Branded as irrational, and unscientific, the way of life of traditional societies was left out of the debate on the best way to achieve development. But it has become increasingly clear that knowledge cannot be a monopoly of an individual, a group, or a culture. If the world is to achieve the development it craves, conscious effort is needed to bring all ideas on board, including indigenous knowledge and Western science in a mutual partnership (Awuah-Nyamekye, 2014).

This chapter examines the indigenous knowledge of Akan² and Ewe³ people of Ghana in order to unearth principles which promote sustainable lifestyle. Dei (1993: 105) defines indigenous knowledge as:

the cultural traditions, values, beliefs, and worldviews of local peoples as distinguished from Western scientific knowledge. Such local knowledge is the product of indigenous peoples' direct experience of the workings of nature and its relationship with the social world. It is also a holistic and inclusive form of knowledge.

This form of knowledge has widely been perceived as offering possible alternative for progress among the world's poor (Lanzano, 2013). Over the last 20 years, Indigenous Knowledge has moved from the periphery to the centre, attracting development agencies such as the World Bank (Briggs, 2013). As a concept, indigenous knowledge has not escaped its fair share of criticism. Lanzano (2013), for instance, points to the difficulty among scholars of indigenous knowledge in their choice of concepts or terms which best

² The Akan constitute 47% of Ghana's population and is the largest ethnic group in Ghana. The Akan ethnic group is made up of the Asante, Assin, Akwapim, Bono, Ahafo, Kwawu, Akyem, Wassa and Fante. The Akan occupy the southern parts of Ghana, mainly in the rain forest and coastal belts of the country (GSS, 2013)

³ The Ewe ethnic group is found in the south-eastern part of Ghana. They make up 13% of the country's population.

described their object of study. Concepts such as ‘indigenous’, ‘traditional; and ‘locality’ have been put across. But each of these concepts has its own ideological problem (Lanzano, 2013). On his part, Briggs (2013) cautions that practitioners have often accepted too quickly the claims of indigenous knowledge without much criticism. He contends that very often, indigenous knowledge has been conceptualised in a simplistic and naive manner, therefore “it has turned out to be less helpful as a development tool than has been supposed or hoped for” (Briggs, 2005: 110).

Despite these criticisms, indigenous knowledge carries with it the advantage of bringing into development discourse voices from the margins. These voices may be uncritical, unscientific and crude, but they nonetheless represent the lived experiences of societies. Underlining the concept of indigenous knowledge is the conviction that every acquired knowledge deserves consideration and evaluation for the good of society. This comes close to the concept of participation, where every individual is considered as capable of producing knowledge for the benefit of society. Indigenous knowledge provides development practitioners the opportunity to treat individuals as not only recipients of knowledge, but also, producers of knowledge (World Bank, 2004).

Indigenous knowledge appears in many forms; however, we focus on the medium of proverbs as a basis to investigate traditional values which promote sustainable lifestyle. Generally, a proverb is a short wise saying, believed to contain a truth. One incontestable definition of proverbs is yet to emerge, but it is evident that a proverb integrates peoples’ experiences, their culture, and their understanding of nature. What makes proverbs a unique tradition is its ability to condense so much meaning into few words (Mieder, 1999).

The method used is literary analysis of selected sayings of relevant proverbs to the subject of sustainable lifestyle and sustainable development. We rely on secondary data, that is, collections of Akan and Ewe proverbs by scholars. The Akan

and Ewe peoples are selected because the two are part of the largest ethnics groups in Ghana (Ghana Statistical Service, 2012). Also many of their proverbial traditions have been put in collections (Opoku, 1997; Dzobo, 1973; 1982).

Suffice to indicate that the analysis of Akan and Ewe proverbs will be done alongside biblical proverbs to explore how both traditions complement each other in promoting sustainable living. It has become important, if not imperative, to include the Christian tradition into the discussion such as this because Christianity has become part and parcel of the cultural landscape of Africa (Hörschele, 2007; Mbiti, 1986). In discussing African life and thought, Christianity and Islam have sometimes been side-lined. The reality, however, is that Christianity and Islam have become part of African way of life, and at times making it difficult to separate African elements from these two traditions. A complementary effort between African and biblical traditions has the advantage of bringing to the fore how African and biblical proverbs cohere to promote sustainable living. Existential reality in Africa indicates that African people resort to both their African traditions as well as either Christianity or Islam in everyday lives. Failure to recognise this development leads to a partial appreciation of what defines the lives of Africans. Besides, several scholars point out the close affinity between the cultures in the Bible and African societies (Fontaine, 1985; Golka, 1993; Westermann, 1995).

This chapter hopes to affirm the view that principles of sustainable living are inherent in the beliefs and values of traditional societies. It emphasises that government, and development practitioners need not only pay attention to this, but also take advantage of it to foster genuine growth based on the principles of sustainable development. They are to look within the culture of the people and use the values and knowledge of the people as vehicles of change, instead of resorting to Western concepts which many times fail to connect with the people.

In order to achieve the above set goals, the chapter is structured into four parts. The first explains briefly the concept of sustainable lifestyle. Following is a discussion on African wisdom traditions, with specific focus on Akan and Ewe proverbs. It aims to identify and probe into the traditional principles which inspire sustainable lifestyle. Next is a probe into how biblical wisdom traditions throw light on sustainable lifestyle. Emphasis is placed on selected biblical proverbs which bear testimony to sustainable lifestyles among ancient Israelites. The final part engages the two traditions in a way that the traditions find grounds of commonality and complementarities between each other.

Sustainable lifestyle: A step towards a better world

Promoting sustainable lifestyle is an important aspect of sustainable development, which takes seriously how economic growth can be consistent with ecological and social needs. Our way of life is now widely acknowledged as the root cause of unsustainable practices (Leonard & Barry, 2009; White, 1967). Most humans want to drive in cars, live in homes with all the modern gadgets which make life comfortable. What we fail to recognise is that over 6 billion people depend on planet earth for livelihood: but there is a limit to planet earth's ability to meet our increasing demands. In satisfying our needs and desires, through the consumption of natural resources, we sometimes compromise the earth's ability to replenish itself (Harris, 2002). Coupled with this is the fact that the earth's natural resources are not only finite, but also fragile (Martin et. al, 2012). Do we continue to live our lives, and care less about the consequences of our choices? Or do we encourage ourselves to work towards addressing the challenges that confront our quest to develop and the effects it has on the environment? The concept of sustainable lifestyle is one approach in addressing the complex nexus between socio-

economic concerns and environmental interests. According to Bedford, Jones and Walker (2004: 48),

Sustainable lifestyles are patterns of action and consumption, used by people to affiliate and differentiate themselves from others, which: meet basic needs, provide a better quality of life, minimise the use of natural resources and emissions of waste and pollutants over the lifecycle, and do not jeopardise the needs of future generations. Sustainable lifestyles should reflect specific cultural, natural, economic and social heritage of each society.

Sustainable lifestyle focuses on the way we live (Scot, 2009). As humans, we share similar needs and aspirations though with some variation on their degree. Many people maintain their lives by nourishing themselves and their children, having access to shelter, and living healthily and happily. However, the manner in which they achieve these needs and aspirations needs to be held in check. Sustainable lifestyle requires a shift in behavioural patterns. It obliges individuals to inculcate the concept of sustainability into their daily life and decision making. Why drive to work when the workplace is within a ten minutes' walk from home? Why use air conditioners when good ventilation can be achieved by the size and number of windows put on a building? Simple choices as those above cumulatively play a key role in improving the state of the environment.

Drawing its presuppositions from the concept of sustainable development, sustainable lifestyle focuses on daily life changes that seek to address the economic, social, and ecological imbalances (Sahakian & Wilhite, 2014). It embraces principles of efficient use of natural resources for a better now and future. Basic values such as honesty, compassions, justice, and freedom, accordingly, are essential for promoting sustainable lifestyle. Below we explore how the values and

principles of sustainable lifestyle are embedded in African and biblical proverbs.

African Wisdom Tradition: Akan and Ewe Proverbs on Sustainable Lifestyle

Akan and Ewe societies are endowed with many wisdom traditions, including traditional songs, proverbs, folklores just to mention a few. These wisdom traditions are important sources for indigenous knowledge. As indicated by scholars (Andan, 1992; Kendie, 2010; Kimilike, 2008), indigenous knowledge are invaluable sources for ideas for social, economic, and spiritual transformation. The genre of proverbs is a conspicuous part of the body of wisdom within the two societies. Proverbs serve as an avenue for many African communities to express ideas and thought without necessarily being plain in their speech. Proverbs help in understanding the inner thought and feelings of the African (Boadi, 1998; Dzobo, 1973; 1982). Proverbs contain values and norms which give clues to what motivates, guides, and influence the behaviour of members of a society (Avoseh, 2012). The Akan has a saying: *obaynansafo yebuno be na yenka n' asem*, meaning, “a word to the wise is enough.”

Among Africans, proverbs act as a catalyst of knowledge, gives wisdom and helps in moral and ethical formulation. As a source of a people's values, proverbs cover a wide range of issues such as belief in God, ancestors, human person, cosmos, environment, development, the future and so on (Asante, 2002; Opoku, 1997). Kudadjie (1996: 2) commenting on the African proverbs makes this point thus:

Proverbs touch on all conditions of life: wealth and poverty, health and sickness, joy and sorrow; occupations: farming, hunting, fishing, building, trading and so on; and other kinds of activity: healing, cooking, walking, sleeping, marriage, childbearing, upbringing, etc. there are proverbs

which speak about and to all manner of people: kings and citizens, nobles and slaves, women and men, children and adults, apprentices and master craftsmen, and so on.

Proverbs help us to unlock hidden truths, clarify vision and unify different perspectives. They add humour and help to diffuse tension on otherwise sensitive situations (Ndlovu and Ncube, 2014).

Relying on collections of Akan and Ewe proverbs, we discuss their role in promoting sustainable lifestyle. The selected Akan and Ewe proverbs reveal aspects of sustainable lifestyle within these societies. They stimulate ideas on several issues which ordinarily would be ignored, but which hold serious consequences for a sustainable world. We select two proverbs from each of the communities to show how these two Ghanaian societies convey their idea of sustainable lifestyle. Suffice to add that there are more proverbs which speak to the idea of sustainable lifestyle and sustainable development. The choice of the selected proverbs is a matter of convenience, since they appear in collections.

Akan proverbs

The Akan as with other African societies is rich in proverbs that are used to convey a number of truths to the people. These proverbs cover all spheres of life's situations. We give the proverb and its meaning and then draw implications for sustainable development.

Nea wɔnom hɔ no wɔnnware hɔ

Lit. Translation: Whatever is drunk one should not bath near it

Meaning: One should always do the right thing

Water is life and its use must be sustained for posterity. Among the indigenous Akan, water is used for a variety of things. It is used for washing, bathing, cooking and more importantly to quench thirst. Its pollution through bathing would jeopardise its use for drinking by those downstream.

Brauer (cited in Awuah-Nyamekye, 2009: 33) makes a case for the availability of portable water for sustainable development. He opines:

The availability of freshwater is a key to sustainable development and an essential in health, food production, and poverty reduction. Without an adequate supply of safe water, all other development efforts are doomed to fail.

This proverb, accordingly, encourages the Akan to ensure that they avoid those acts that would compromise their future. For them, a society that is unable to access water is likely to perish. What is more, unsafe water is as dangerous as not having water. Literally, the proverb requires members of the society to value water and recognise its importance for community development. Figuratively, it is cautioning people against any improper behaviour that endangers society. Central to the proverb, therefore, is one's ability to conduct one's self in a way that would be beneficial to both the community today and in the future. People, many a time, tend to misuse properties meant for the whole community and thereby deny future members of the community usage of such facility. The above proverb, therefore, encourages the Akan to be responsible in their actions so as not to jeopardise the survival needs of future generations.

Wusum brode a, sum kwadu bi, nea obi nim nea obegu kɔm

Lit. Translation: when you cultivate plantain, cultivate banana as well for you do not know which of them will save you in times of famine

Meaning: always have an alternative plan at hand

Plantain is an important staple food among the Akan. Plantain is used for all manner of food varieties among the Akan. It is, for example, an important component in the preparation of *fufu*, (a local dish), made from the combination of cassava and unripe plantain. In many Akan societies, *fufu* cannot be prepared without plantain being added. Banana is part of the tropical fruits. When unripe, banana has the

characteristics of plantain and can be used in place of plantain in the preparation of *fufu* in the event of shortage in the supply of plantain. Recognising their ability to be used alternatively, the proverb advises the Akan to have alternative plan (s) in order to deal with any unforeseen occurrences. Another Akan proverb which has a similar meaning is “*adi di daa ye keyen adi preko*” which literally means: “it is not good to eat all that you have in one day”. This proverb “sums up the traditional Ghanaian [Akan] understanding of the concept sustainable development [as well as sustainable lifestyle]” (Awuah-Nyamekye, 2009: 28).

The message these two proverbs convey is important for policy makers in Ghana in particular, and Africa in general, who have the tendency to make one-fit-all policy without thinking of alternatives in the event of the policy failing. For instance, currently, Ghana is facing a lot of challenges on her energy front. If policy makers had not banked all their hopes on hydro to generate power and had thought of an alternative alongside the hydro generating plants, the country would not be in the current difficulty. The proverb is admonishing us to be mindful of our decisions and think of the future implications of what we do today.

Ewe proverbs

Menye vovo na kutae wogbea alo dona o

Lit. Translation: it is not because of fear of death, that you should stop sleeping

Meaning: even though we know that death will eventually come, that should not be a justification for not planning for long term events

Death is the inevitable end of earthly life. Every one of us will embrace it at the appointed time. The fact that we will die does not mean that we should be afraid to sleep. The Ewe uses this proverb to inform the people not to be afraid to plan because we do not know what the future holds for us. The fact that one will fail in an endeavour does not mean that one

should be afraid to plan for the future or to make other endeavours in life. Many African countries are facing hardships today because of their failure to plan for the future. We are more concerned with fulfilling today's desires than thinking of the next generation.

Afe fi be yemenya gbe sig be x]t] ade ye de nu o, eya ta yedea do do

Lit. Translation: The house-rat says he does not know when his landlord would send him away packing, that's why he bores his own hole

Meaning: we must prepare for the future since we do not know what will happen to us.

Among traditional Ewe, this proverb is used to teach members of the community the need to make provisions for the future. The proverb is tasking people not to be complacent but strive to ensure that they are prepared for the future. There is always the tendency for people who have official accommodation to fail to make provisions for their future. Many civil servants residing in official bungalows have retired and have nowhere to go since they had failed to make plans for their own accommodation during the time which they were still employed. The proverb teaches that as a person, one should not rely solely on the benevolence of others as they may one day turn their back on you. This proverb also gets to speak to African countries that always depended on handouts from their so-called development partners. Many a time, when these development partners face challenges of their own, they are unable to fulfil their pledges thereby throwing the budgets of these countries off gear. Ghana today is back to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) looking for a bail out for its economic problems. The country could have avoided this embarrassing situation if it had managed its resources well. This is a principle that is applied to sustainable development. Government must not rely on development partners alone to meet the developments needs of its own people, but must put in place measures to ensure that these needs would be met through careful planning. The proverb in a way teaches us to

be prudent in our choices as what we decide today will impact on our future and generations yet unborn.

Biblical Wisdom Tradition and Sustainable Lifestyle: The Case of Proverbs

Wisdom tradition in the Bible is represented by three main books namely; Proverbs, Job, and Ecclesiastics. A unifying concept among these books is the idea of “wisdom,” known in Hebrew as *Hockmah*. An adequate definition of this term eludes biblical scholars (Crenshaw, 1998). For Williams (1962), *Hockmah* is an attitude underpinned by proper conduct, which in turn is based on knowledge. Fox (2008) sees *Hockmah* as an approach to reality. One that perceives the human mind not only as an intellectual power, but also having the inherent ability to “illuminate darkness and guide us alright” (Fox, 2008: 3). On his part, Crenshaw (1998: 3) explains that the underlying spirit of *Hockmah* is the “search for specific ways to ensure personal well-being in everyday life, to make sense of extreme adversity and vexing anomalies, and to transmit this hard-earned knowledge so that successive generations will embody it”.

The book of Proverbs (subsequently to be referred to as Proverbs) is the foundation to Israelite wisdom traditions (Childs, 1979). One striking unique feature of Proverbs is its presentation of “wisdom” as a main topic on its own amidst its numerous and diverse maxims and observations. “Wisdom” as a topic is scarcely touched on elsewhere in ancient Near Eastern Wisdom Literature (Fox, 2008). For Proverbs then, it is not just a matter of presenting traditional truths, but also deliberating on what embodies wisdom.

Important to wisdom is the formation of character. According to Scott (1971: 52), Proverbs “is not indoctrination but illumination and education in the true meaning of the word, to awaken the mind, kindle the imagination and train the judgment”. Among many things, Proverbs is designed to help

its readers to achieve success, by avoiding the snares and dangers in life (Blank 1962, 857). The didactic nature of Israelite proverbs and the emphasis on character formation is crucial for achieving sustainable lifestyle. The complexity surrounding the world's problems which have necessitated the consciousness of sustainability needs major shifts in peoples' perspectives and way of life. It is here that Proverbs proves to be relevant even in our times. Interested in optimal behaviour for individual and societal good, Proverbs provides us the opportunity to interrogate how ancient Israelite wisdom can help shape our journey towards a sustainable future. Below, we explore selected sayings in Proverbs which address behavioural changes in the areas of economic, social, and ecological spheres of life.

Interested in optimal life of its audience, Proverbs pays attention to economic activities, since they form the basis for the use of material resources to support and enhance social structures. Proverbs' interest in economic activities, however, is not just an observation of how ancient Israelites made a living. On the contrary, the sayings delve into values and standards that should guide the economic footprint of Israelite society. A case in point is Prov. 11: 1. It reads:

Dishonest balances are an abomination to the Lord; but complete scales are his delight.

The theme of this saying is honesty in business dealings. Business fraud was strongly condemned in the Israelite society. From the Torah (Lev 19: 36; Deut 25: 15) to the Prophets (Amos 8: 5; Mic 6: 11), and the Writings (Prov 16: 11; 20: 10), dishonesty in business transactions features as an important topic. In Prov 11: 1, two economic behaviours are pitched against each other. The first is dishonest, insofar as it seeks to offer one partner of the transaction an unfair advantage, while the second is honest because both partners have a fair transaction. The Hebrew word *mirmāh* translated as **dishonest**

also connotes **evil**. Thus, a person of a *mirmāb* character seeks to deceive a victim in order to harm him or her (Walkte, 2004). Such a deceitful practice is an **abomination** (*tô'ēvāb*) to the Lord. By contrast one who engages in business transactions with the mind of šālēm, translated here as **complete** (but could also mean **fair** or **just**), pleases the Lord. By describing dishonest business practices as an **abomination to the Lord** (*tô'ēvāb yēbwāb*), the sage stresses on the degree to which such practices were repugnant and destructive. Unfair dealings in business are injurious against those who are defrauded. Ultimately, it destroys the society.

Values of honesty and integrity emerge as foundational for good economic practices and peaceful society. Profit making is central to successful business, but it should not erase the fact that community interest is paramount. In other words, economic interest should not override social and community values: rather economic goals should be pursued in tandem with them (Mawere, 2011). Business men and woman need to adopt fair practices in their dealings, since anything contrary hurts the poor, and compromise our ability to achieve a sustainable world (Mawere, 2011).

Upholding the importance of economic lifestyle guided by the values of honesty and integrity, Israelite sages also paid attention to social behaviours that enforced societal harmony. Thus, the book of Proverbs places a high premium on social relations. It affirms the core tenet of the Bible –that is humans cannot live in isolation from each other. This is especially true for the poor who need help of others to make life meaningful. Good social networks among the poor enable them improve upon their ability to access resources and to participate in decisions that affect their lives. Prov. 21: 13 carries such idea in a profound way. It reads:

*He who shuts his ear from the cry of the poor; he also will call
and not be answered.*

Strong in its rhetorical appeal, the saying focuses on one's responsibility towards the poor and indeed all others. It has a threefold structure with three interrelated themes. The first part concerns the act of not lending an **ear** (*ʕəʕen*): that is the deliberate decision of not listening to the poor. Following is a convergence between the subject and the object: they both seem to be in a distress. However, there is also a contrast in the sense that in the first part, the crying (*ʕəʕāqāh*) is carried out by the poor. In the second, the calling (*qārāʕ*) is done by the one who refused to listen to the poor. Ending the saying is a repetition of the negative action in the first part: **not being answered** (*wəʕloʕ yəʕāneh*). The cry of the poor in the first part of the saying and the call of the subject in the second part correspond to convey a sense of distress. That is they both suggest the importance of attending to one another for a harmonious, peaceful and sustainable society.

Importantly, Prov 21: 13 asserts that the refusal to attend to the poor is an anti-social behaviour. It has the ability to harm society (McKane, 1970). Generally, Proverbs is strong on its condemnation of insensitivity towards the poor. According to Westermann (1995: 44), the denial of assistance in Proverbs is “not merely an issue of omission that is being criticized; rather, the person’s whole orientation to life is being characterized”. Literature on climate change reveals the lifestyle inequalities that confront our world. On the one hand, there are the rich with their luxurious and plentiful expenses, which contribute most to climate change through their anthropogenic activities. On the other hand, there are the poor who struggle to provide the basic human needs for themselves and their families, and yet are the most vulnerable to the effects of climate change. Prov 21: 13 conveys the message that refusal to help the poor damages the corporate life of the society. Such negative action harms the socio-economic supportive system that guarantees the stability of society (Kimilike, 2008).

As an agrarian society, ancient Israel paid attention to proper use of her land and livestock. Proverbs, for instance,

throws light on good agricultural practices, with particular interest in their ethical dimensions. Farming involves at every stage decisions that bear directly on the state of the earth and its living creatures and non-living entities. Thus there is need to shape our agricultural practices with good and sustainably acceptable values. Poor agricultural practices could result in depletion of water resources, soil erosion, and fertilizer and pesticide contamination of water bodies (Davis, 2009). On the side of animal farming, poor practices lead to discomfort of animals, which compromise their ability to grow, survive, and re-produce (Good Practice Note, 2006).

Focusing on animal farming, Prov 12: 10 admonishes farmers to be prudent in the care for their flocks. It reads:

The righteous knows the life of his animal; but the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.

The subject of the first part, **the righteous** (*ṣādīq*), who is likely to be the farmer, is connected to his animals through the verb **knows** (*yôdē'a*). The Hebrew word (*yāda'*) which is commonly rendered here as **to know** has a wide range of nuanced meanings ranging from possessing information to having sexual intercourse. In this context, it means caring for (cf. Murphy, 2002). By extension, caring for an animal will include but not limited to knowing an animal's condition that is whether it has eaten or not, and paying attention to its other needs. This same understanding can also be extended to the caring of the environment and the symbiotic relationship between the latter and human beings. To undertake these activities is to please God. Other texts in the Bible also promote this sympathetic and symbiotic relationship with animals. For example God is pictured as compassionate towards animals as he provides rains for the growth of pasture for the animals (cf. Deut 11: 14-15). Similar ideas are portrayed in Deut 22: 6-7; 25: 4, and Jonah 4: 11. The compassionate act of the righteous is contrasted with the insensitiveness of the

wicked. Couched in an oxymoron, the opening of the second clause **but the tender mercies of the wicked** (*wěrahǎé rěšǎ'ím*) ridicules the **wicked** (*rāšǎ'*). The wicked person is by nature merciless. His cruelty towards his animals could be manifested in his refusal to feed the animals or provide appropriate shelter for them.

With its simple idea, Prov 12: 10 bears an important message for today's farmers, especially those in animal farming. That is the act of farming requires right character. It is not an activity that any individual can venture into. This message is crucial, not only because right attitude towards farming ensures success, but also because it intrinsically connects the farmer to nature. Farming with an attitude that connects one to nature is sustainably viable, in the sense that productivity is not what drives the farmer, but rather the healthy relationship between the land and its people (Leopold, 1966).

African and Biblical proverbs in dialogue

Because of the existential reality of African Christians resorting to both their traditional heritage and that of the Bible, there is the need to engage these two traditions critically in order to stimulate our perceptual reasoning towards sustainable lifestyle. The analysis of the Akan and Ewe proverbs, alongside biblical proverbs shows that there are enough resources in terms of tenets, values, and principles to drive Africans towards a sustainable world. For instance, emerging as central to both tradition is a strong orientation towards the future. The future has a stake in the present. In other words, present actions have a bearing on how the future turns out to be. From the perspective of Akan and Ewe proverbs, the future only exists as a potential. It is never a guarantee of success or failure. With this understanding, the traditional Akan and Ewe societies place high premium on the present. The present is key to ensuring a successful future. The Ewe proverb on the house-rat and the landlord, for instance, supports this view.

Not knowing when the landlord will come knocking, the house-rat prepares beforehand. It is almost like keeping one eye on the present and the other on the future. Thus, the two (present and future) fuse together and become inseparable as individuals negotiate their way through life. From the biblical point of view, although not conspicuous in the selected sayings, the concern for the future is projected in a nuanced manner. Paying attention to the character of individuals, the sayings strike a connection between one's character and one's future. Present behavioural patterns cumulatively draw the moral shape of the future. For instance, Prov 11: 1, condemns conducting business transactions with a dishonest character. The global financial crisis of 2008 testifies to the danger of ignoring the complexity of human behaviour in financial matters (Reavis, 2009). For Prov 11: 1 a better way of securing the future is paying attention to current modes of behaviour.

Both African and biblical sayings place premium on the human person. The focus on the human person should not be mistaken for human superiority over other creatures or nature in general as deep ecologists have pointed out (Naess, 1973). Rather, the focus is to point out that humans are the agents of change in the march towards a sustainable future. It is their actions and inactions, which determine the quest to achieve a true sustainable world. For instance, the Akan saying, *Nea mDnom hD no mDnnware hD*, which proscribes bathing in drinking water raises the important issue of individual responsibility. It indicates how one's actions have societal repercussions. Thus, the saying promotes the idea that humans are intricately connected, and the earlier we accept and imbibe the wisdom of our interconnectedness, the better it will be for us, as we aim towards a sustainable world. Similarly, Prov 21: 13 upholds the need to pay attention to relationships between humans. Through its negative rhetoric, it pushes further the positive notion that humans need to be each other's keeper. This message needs attention if significant progress can be made towards achieving a sustainable world. Since poverty is a major

contributor to unsustainable practices, bridging the gap between the rich and poor becomes imperative. For Prov 11: 1 reaching a helping hand to the poor (or the one who cries for help) is the right thing to do not because it is good to share what you have, but because it is a fundamental part of humans to help each other.

Concern for the environment is also displayed in African and biblical traditions. In many African societies, the natural world is a medium for experiencing the divine. Spirit deities reside in rocks, caves, water bodies, and mountains. Accordingly, many of these natural bodies are treated with reverence. Although the selected Akan and Ewe proverbs do not overtly show concern for the natural world, the Akan saying on bathing in water bodies speaks to contemporary developments on the use of water bodies in Ghana. Several water bodies in Ghana, such as the Pra River and the Ankobra River, and the Bonsa River have become sites for “galamsey” operations (illegal mining) (Kusi-Ampofo & Boachie-Yiadom, 2012). Also, people defecate near water bodies, a practice common with people living along the coast of Ghana. Besides their immediate effect on humans, such practices threaten the ecosystem of these natural resources. Prov 12: 10 teaches that our relationship with the natural world, especially animals, should be based on the true spirit of care and love. Knowing the life of an animal, as the saying indicates, suggests a proactive step on the part of humans to acquaint themselves with the concerns of animals and natural life in general in order to give them the necessary protection and care (cf. Dewitt, 2000).

Lastly, it should be pointed out that an overarching principle within the life and thought of African and biblical world is the belief that the physical world is in communion with the spiritual world. For African traditional societies, spirit beings are densely part of the physical world. As Mbiti (1969: 74) puts it, “... it is a unit within the physical, and that these two intermingle and dovetail into each other so much that it is

not easy, or even necessary, at times to draw distinction or separate them”. From the perspective of the book of Proverbs, although wisdom is very much anthropocentric in orientation, it is also at its core theocentric (Waltke, 1979). The world is a creation of a God who expects that everything in it continues to abide within the good of creation. Clearly, both traditions value the role the spirit world plays in shaping the lives of humans on earth. For many Africans, the reality of a spiritual dimension to life defines their cultural experience. Therefore, it is a step in the right direction when development programmes find ways to factor in people’s spirituality into them. Important advantage spirituality offers for development is the ability to influence the heart. If sustainable lifestyle deals with behavioural changes, then spirituality (which resolves itself to the heart) can be used to push ahead these behavioural changes.

Conclusion

African and biblical traditions contain gems of wisdom that can aid our quest to live sustainably with each other and the environment. Rather than brand the epistemologies of these traditions as unscientific and unreliable, we should find innovative ways to factor in their ideals and visions for society into mainstream development agenda. Many traditional Africans continue to hold on to their African heritage as well as take seriously the biblical traditions. African leaders together with academics should approach both traditions with open minds, be critical always, and more importantly explore creative ways to factor them in our development agenda. Many people hold the view that African countries continues to reel in poverty because they fail to take advantage of their assets. Perhaps it is not too late to start paying attention to what surrounds us. Very often, development practitioners have placed emphasis on Africa’s natural resources, neglecting the fact that humans that oversee the resources are the key agents,

and their actions ultimately shape the future. This chapter, therefore, concludes on the note that African leaders and academics should pay more attention to the values and traditions of the people. They should bring these values and traditions to the fore of development discourse and practice, especially in the area of governance. Finally they (African leaders) should be seen as embodiment and custodians of African values.

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Indigenous Knowledge and Public Education in Africa: A Search for a Sustainable Education Curriculum

Munyaradzi Mawere

Introduction

Societies across the world have since time immemorial depended on their indigenous knowledges to solve their day-to-day socio-economic problems, address various environmental challenges, and adapt to change. Yet, the term *indigenous knowledge* just like the term *indigenous* itself has prevailed as a generic term, but not without problems. The use of the term [*indigenous knowledge*] has indeed met with serious problems, vilifications, and criticisms especially since the beginning of formal de-colonial projects in the mid 40s across the globe such that it [the term] has now assumed a diversity of meanings as shall be seen in the ensuing discussion. Some scholars [such as Paulin Hountondji (1997) and David Turnbull (2000)] view it as pejorative and sneering when a group of people are referred to as *indigenous* or their ideas, beliefs and practices are referred to as *indigenous knowledge*. For this reason, even the world board, United Nations (UN), is hesitant to use it. Rather, the UN has developed what it calls, a ‘modern understanding’ of the term indigenous (and therefore indigenous knowledge) based on the following tenets:

- Self- identification as indigenous peoples at the individual level and accepted by the community as their member;
- Historical continuity with pre-colonial and/or pre-settler societies;

- Strong link to territories and surrounding natural resources;
- Distinct social, economic or political systems;
- Distinct language, culture and beliefs;
- Form non-dominant groups of society;
- Resolve to maintain and reproduce their ancestral environments and systems as distinctive peoples and communities (UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, [n.d: p. 1]).

Notwithstanding the various connotations, vilifications, and nuances that the term indigenous knowledge has assumed over the years, I underscore that I see no problem in using the term indigenous knowledge as long as it [the term] is used in neutral terms. Even of late, world bodies such as the United Nations have come to realise indigenous knowledge as an indispensable partner in both socio-economic and political development of any human community in the world. The Global Knowledge Conference (Toronto, June 1997), for instance, emphasised the urgent need to learn, preserve, and exchange indigenous knowledge. In his recent call for a new inclusive approach to development, the President of the World Bank has stressed the need for a framework that deals *inter alia* with indigenous people and their knowledge (World Bank 1998).

Whereas much discussion has already started regarding indigenous knowledge and the status of contemporary African development (World Bank 1998), the current chapter resuscitates the debate examining it in the context of public education in Africa. The chapter explores the role that indigenous knowledge could and should play in public education system in the continent of Africa, and how this role could possibly influence the three principles of pan Africanism namely; collective self-reliance, self-sustaining development and economic growth. The focus is on the potential role of

indigenous knowledge in motivating, raising interest, promoting innovative thinking and a sense of self consciousness in the learners. The chapter begins with an exploration of the concepts, indigenous knowledge and intangible heritage. I have chosen to give some emphasis on intangible heritage for the major reason that intangible heritage being normally expressed in special prose, poetry, dance, drama, folklore, proverbs, idioms and religion is a rich source of societal history and social development. This conceptualisation of terms is followed by a discussion on how indigenous knowledge can have positive impact on learners and some areas in the school and society; a discussion which I think is a prerogative of the people (especially of Africa) and a fight against a culture of geocentric materialism and for democratic space in education, particularly in knowledge production and dissemination at a global scale.

Understanding Indigenous Knowledge and Intangible Heritage

Indigenous knowledge

The term *indigenous knowledge*, as the term *indigenous* itself has often been understood differently. In the Western perspective especially during colonialism, the term indigenous knowledge has often been negatively associated with backwardness/primitiveness, old-fashionedness, staticness, wildness, ungodliness, and the natural. Indigenous knowledge was therefore not championed in political and academic discourses. It was not even perceived as something worth studying and could not be promoted through either formal training or education. However, for many indigenous populations of Africa, Latin America and Asia, the term indigenous knowledge or what others have called the native's ways of knowing, is positively associated with the creativity and dynamic ways in which residents of a particular locality have

understood themselves in relation to their natural environment (see Semali and Kincheloe 1999: 3).

In view of this understanding, the term indigenous knowledge has, over the years, enjoyed different definitions and conceptualisations (see Altieri 1995; Melchias 2001; Odora-Hoppers 2001, 2002; Mawere 2012, 2013; Ocholla 2007; Mapara 2009; Shizha 2013). Also, for this reason, among others, indigenous knowledge is known by other names such as: indigenous ways of knowing, traditional knowledge, indigenous technical knowledge, rural knowledge, ethno-science/people's science (Altieri 1995; Mawere 2014). It is important, however, to underline that though vary in their articulation, all these names try to explain one and the same thing which in this paper shall be referred to as indigenous knowledge.

For scholars such as Melchias (2001), indigenous knowledge refers to practices that have evolved for generations through trial and error and proved flexible enough to cope with change. As can be seen, this definition emphasises the colonial racist idea that indigenous knowledge is a monopoly of trials and error while Western science is characterised by laboratory experimentations. I should underscore, however, that Melchias' conception of indigenous knowledge is flawed in that he fails to note that even indigenous knowledge itself is also characterised by observations and experiments, but of course in an 'open laboratory' – the community. It is only that observations and experiments for indigenous knowledge were not documented but preserved under cultural institutional framework and practices.

Altieri (1995) provides a somewhat similar definition. He defines indigenous knowledge as knowledge form that has originated locally and naturally, and has failed to die despite the racial and colonial onslaught that it has suffered at the hands of Western imperialism and arrogance (see Altieri 1995: 114). Altieri's understanding of indigenous knowledge implies that indigenous knowledge exist only in those areas that were

affected by colonialism. In this paper, I go beyond Altieri to argue that indigenous knowledge exist in all human societies including those of the former European colonisers and so-called developed world.

Emphasising on the different terminologies that indigenous knowledge has enjoyed over the years, Warren (1991) described the term 'indigenous knowledge' (IK) as one used synonymously with 'traditional' and 'local' knowledge to differentiate the knowledge developed by a given community from the international knowledge system sometimes also called 'Western' system, generated through universities, government research centres and private industry. This definition by Warren has the limitation that when indigenous knowledge is described as traditional, it is presumed to be static. Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983: 4) have argued that traditional does not preclude innovation and change up to a point as new tradition can be born out of an old one (what they have referred to as 'invention of tradition' (see Mammo 1999: 16), but some form of stasis is always implied in the term traditional. Nevertheless, I still find it problematic to think that indigenous knowledge is static. Elsewhere I (Mawere 2014), have argued against scholars such as Paulin Hountondji (1997) and David Turnball (2000) who hold that indigenous knowledge is static and immovable respectively. I have argued that this understanding is a result of abject lack of understanding and a narrow conceptualisation of indigenous knowledge as a commodity: it is a complete failure to understand the dynamism and creativity associated with indigenous knowledge.

In view of the preceding discussion, I should be quick to point out that there are a myriad of definitions that have been proffered over the years in an attempt to explain what indigenous knowledge really is. For this study, indigenous knowledge refers to a set of ideas, beliefs, and practices (some of which have indigenous religious underpinnings) of indigenous people of a specific locale that has been used by its

people to interact with their environment and other people over a long period of time.

Intangible heritage

This is a term used to describe aesthetic, spiritual, symbolic and other social values that people in a given geographical location may associate with a particular site. The social values include language, oral traditions, taboos, rituals, music, dance, knowledge forms, art, folklore, riddles, idioms, and cultural spaces (see also Deacon 2009; Chabata and Chiwaura 2014). As could be known that intangible heritage is part and parcel of the realm of indigenous knowledge given that they can only be known through local ways of knowing such as traditions, customs, and practices, it is also known as living heritage. I should also underscore that since heritage become a heritage only if society attaches value to it, intangible heritage, just like indigenous knowledge under which it is part, is important in many similar ways as indigenous knowledge. Besides, given that intangible cultural heritage is a constituent element of indigenous knowledge, it suffered the same historical imbalances as the latter. For this reason, I will look at the importance of both indigenous knowledge and intangible heritage to the learning process of the African child at the same time. Yet, I should point out that while there are overlaps between indigenous knowledge and academic knowledge/knowledge from the academy (what others like June George [1999] call academic knowledge or conventional science), there are also differences between the two. Below, I spell out some of the major differences between indigenous knowledge and conventional science.

Differences between indigenous knowledge and conventional science/academic knowledge

Conventional Science	Indigenous Knowledge
Generated by planned procedures and rules	Generated by societal members through trial and error as members seek solutions to their daily problems
Draw on set out principles, theories and laws	Draw on existing societal wisdom and other local resources and a sense of creativity
Passed on through documents and store of the knowledge	Passed on through oral mode (though this is changing) from one generation to the next
Found in school curriculum	Normally not found in school curriculum (though this is changing)
Generated in academy	Generated in specific local contexts though influenced by knowledge generated in other contexts (which means IKs are dynamic and not static)
Found in packages i.e. with labels such as chemistry, biology	Normally not found in packages
Normally found in permanent form such as theories and in print	It is constantly changing, produced as well as reproduced though perceived by outsiders/external observers as static
Emphasises competitive individualism as it eliminates students through failure of tests	Emphasises cooperative communalism as it strives to include all children in the community

In the sections that follow, I look at the role that indigenous knowledge could and should play in the teaching-learning process in education system.

Indigenous knowledge in education system: For what role?

■*De-racialise African educational systems*

One critical dimension to education in Africa and in fact the world over is that it is biased in terms of racial lines. Curricular especially in Africa was crafted and founded on racist principles and imperial technocrats afraid of the rising of Africa. Critical to this is the pedagogical content, format and methodologies ingrained within the education system, including universities. In many countries in Africa, for example, the medium of communication remains the language of the former colonial masters. Taking the example of Zimbabwe, while Shona and Ndebele (the major local linguistic dialects in the country) are now studied in all education level (primary to university levels), there remains a bias towards the language of the former colonial settlers, English, which in fact is considered as the medium of communication in both learning institutions and the job market. In Mozambique, the scenario is even worse as pupils are forced to drop their traditional names as soon as they start their primary level at school. Portuguese also remains the sole medium of communication at school and in the job market. This means that education systems in Zimbabwe and Mozambique as elsewhere in Africa do not fully reflect the content of the cultures, environments, histories, and situations of the indigenous groups. I argue in this paper that this way of doing is an impediment to critical thinking: it promotes racial inequalities and identities, as the continued use of foreign languages as mediums of communication implies their superiority over indigenous/local languages. The study and promotion of the use indigenous languages as imbedded in indigenous knowledge systems, would concertize the African people of the value and importance of their own languages. Such recognition if translated into practice would result in the de-racialisation of our education systems. The need to de-racialise the education system in Africa is in fact long over-due chiefly because of the continued hypocrisy surrounding the

mantra that Western knowledge is universal. A critique of the ideological foundations of African education is advanced by Mazrui (1978:13); he regards neo-colonial cultural dependency as a threat to African psychological autonomy and sovereignty and reports that: “Very few educated Africans are even aware that they are also in cultural bondage. All educated Africans ... are still cultural captives of the West.” Also, Ngugi wa Thiongo and Julius Nyerere in their “Decolonising the mind (1986)” and “Education for self-reliance” (1968) respectively longed for the same. They realised that racialised curriculum is a new form of imperialism – a neocolonial instrument of manipulation – to control knowledge production in the world. In view of this realisation, I argue with UNESCO (2003: 17) that “local languages are the means for preserving, transmitting and applying traditional knowledge in schools. A bilingual or multilingual education, allows the full participation of all learners; it gives learners the opportunity to confront, in the positive sense, the knowledge of their community with knowledge from elsewhere”. To buttress my arguments raised above, I invite Rattray who in making a wake-up call to the African, had this to say:

Guard the national soul of your race and never be tempted to despise your past. Therein I believe lies the sure hope that your sons and daughters will one day make their own original contributions to knowledge and progress (Rattray, 1954: ix).

I argue in view of the above that de-racialised African education systems is more urgent than ever given that education not only shapes the consciousness of those who operate within its pedagogical orbit, but it also determine the social, political, economic, and technological conditions of one’s environment. I therefore underline that a key aspect of any education system is the learners’ understanding of the role

that indigenous knowledge can play in fostering socio-economic and political development of the society.

Promote innovative thinking as it provides the basis for problem-solving strategies for local communities

As Busia (1964:17) puts it: ‘Traditional education sought to produce men and women who were not self-centred, who put the interest of the group above personal interest’, men and women who were innovative and think tanks of the society. This means that the inclusion of students’ prior knowledge in education curriculum promotes and enhances innovative thinking and constructivism (to use Jean Piaget’s sense of the word) in the learners. This is because learners will be afforded the chance to abstract understanding from their personal experiences, understanding of the local conditions, and what they already know from their respective communities. In Nigeria’s Jigawa State, for example, one young Nigerian has invented a natural refrigeration system that does not require electricity, gas or paraffin to operate. The system, which is also known as “pot-in-pot cooling system” is said to be as efficient as the modern refrigerator. The system can keep perishable foods fresh for upto a month. Further, it is said that three quarters of the people in Jigawa have adopted the system which has also helped farmers keeping their perishable foods for longer periods, and has also curtailed the movement of people from rural areas to towns. This reinforces the point that indigenous education was practical and relevant to the needs of society. Fafunwa (1982:9-10), for instance, notes that the focus of education in pre-colonial Africa was social responsibility, political participation, work orientation, morality and spiritual values. Learning was by doing, which involved observation, imitation and participation in all or many of the individual’s societal activities. For Kenyatta (1965:119) such type of education had the merit that ‘knowledge acquired is related to a practical need, and, ... is merged into activity and can be recalled when that activity is again required’. In view of this, I

argue that the invention of the pot-in-pot cooling system by the young Nigerian could have been a result of the abstraction of his understanding of a refrigerator and what he knows from experience at home (cf. Mawere 2014).

Evaluate the effectiveness of conventional science and indigenous knowledge

Indigenous knowledge, for example, that which deals with beliefs and practices [intangible heritage] could be used by learners in science classes to evaluate the effectiveness of indigenous knowledge and conventional science in the learners' real life. Through the inclusion of IK in curriculum, students are afforded the opportunity to compare and contrast different forms of knowledge for their good and that of the society they are part. In fact on careful analysis, one notices that many so-called traditional communities have same content areas as those found in formal education. For instance, many communities teach their members about beliefs and practices related to plant growth, human nutrition, child bearing, pregnancy, food preparation and preservation, medicine, animal husbandry and others. All these areas are also taught at school in science and agriculture which means that indigenous knowledge represents an important component of the so-called global knowledge on different issues. With indigenous knowledge and conventional science in curriculum, learners are, therefore, better empowered to shake off the chains of imperial domination, make their own decisions and chart their own destiny based on what they learn both at home and at school.

Motivate and generate interest in learners

Since IK is knowledge that arises directly out of the children's real life experiences, its incorporation in the school curriculum can motivate and bolster the intellectual fortunes and interest in the learners as they realise that recognition is given to what they do, know, and already say in their

communities. This in fact resonates well with the adage “we start from the known to the unknown” which suggests that indigenous knowledge, being knowledge that the learners know before their entry into the academy, will in no doubt inspire, titillate, and stimulate their minds to abstract and even seek solutions to their daily problems using locally generated solutions. In Western Mozambique, a traditional beer [*tototo*] brewing similar to the distillation system students learn in science at school, has also been invented. On realising that their fruit trees [mango, citrus and banana] produce more than they can consume, the Mandau people of Western Mozambique have devised a traditional beer brewing system through which they make use of the over-ripen fruits. With this system, over-ripen fruits are put in a big clay pot. The contents in the pot are then boiled, turning the contents’ liquid into steam and then steam before it is condensed to form a colourless liquid. The liquid is a traditional beer with alcohol content allegedly much higher than the commercially manufactured liquors. Thus, where students learn the science of distillation after their understanding of the *tototo* beer brewing system, abstraction is much easier and motivation and interest in technology and development issues generated more flexibly.

To teach language and instil a sense of self consciousness and cultural identity

Indigenous knowledge could also be used to teach language, recount history, reclaim their humanity and dignity, and promote a sense of self consciousness and cultural identity in learners. This is critical as people are people because of culture. In fact, we are distinguished from other ethnic groups and even animal groupings through a distinct culture. And, even our learning will contribute more to our society if what we know and experience on daily basis is incorporated into our school curriculum. As Busia (1964:31-33) reports, there was a widespread expectation among many Africans before and after

independence that “education should be rooted in Africa’s own cultural heritage and values and have relevance to African societies.” Busia, thus, felt that schools could only preserve and transmit this culture by maintaining African languages. This point was made even more forcefully by Moumouni (1968:275), who claims that “real literacy ... can only be taught in an African language and should extend to the entire population.” Azeuabor (2000) maintains a similar view. He argues that the question of language is important because language is the tool and primary medium of philosophical expression and a vehicle of the community’s thought which plays a fundamental role in the way people know and understand the world around them. Besides, it is through language that a group of people identifies and distinguishes itself from others. Woolman (2001: 41) also emphasises the same when he says that “cultivation of oral and written fluency in local African languages is important in building self-esteem, preserving culture, and advancing the literary output and identity of African Peoples”. For him (Ibid), “The importance of African language development is further underscored by the historical reality that early nation-building in Europe was closely linked to the cultivation of vernacular languages and literature”. No wonder scholars like Francis Ogunmodede (1995) argues in his paper: *History and historiography in African philosophy* that we cannot critically explain human experience and culture using a foreign language as this would tantamount to cultural alienation and distortions. Under the broadened concept of inclusive curricula and teaching materials promoted by The UNESCO *Guidelines for Inclusion: Ensuring Access to Education for All*, (2005), the local community is encouraged to contribute to active learning that responds to the cultural and physical environment of the school. The *Guidelines* define inclusive education as “a process of addressing and responding to the diversity of needs of all learners through increasing participation in learning, cultures and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education. It involves

changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, within a common vision which covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the public school system to educate all children”(page 13). Inclusive education also implies a relevant and responsive curriculum that takes into account indigenous languages along with other languages. As stated in the UNESCO Position Paper “Education in a Multilingual World” (2003) “the requirements of global and national participation, and the specific needs of particular, culturally and linguistically distinct communities can only be addressed by multilingual education. In regions where the language of the learner is not the official or national language of the country, bilingual and multilingual education can make mother tongue instruction possible while providing at the same time the acquisition of languages used in larger areas of the country and the world...” (pages 17 and 18).

Through the study of African indigenous knowledge systems, learners can easily appreciate their language, cultural identity, and the wisdom and contribution to knowledge and technological advancement of their ancestors. In fact, ‘re-evaluation of traditional education is part of a process of reclaiming cultural identity with deeper roots in authentic African traditions’ (Woolman 2001: 31). The teaching of indigenous knowledge such as children’s traditional games, for example, does not only help youths to be creative, morally sensitive, and innovative, but to appreciate the contribution of forebears’ creative genius and indigenous epistemologies in the world of language, games and physical education. As I lamented in one of my books titled: *“The struggle of indigenous knowledge systems in an age of globalisation”*, this is in spite of the fact that, useful as they are, none of these African children’s traditional games have been incorporated into the school curricula even here in Zimbabwe. Only Western-biased games such as chess, tennis ball, net ball and others feature. Yet, a reverse of such a situation especially in Africa is more urgent

now than ever if the African people are to be mentally liberated. As Steve Biko (1970: 51) notes African cultures were “battered out of shape by settler colonialists” through Western education. I add that for a long time now Africa has stooped to the neo-colonial machinations, bullying antics, onslaughts, subjugation (both physical and intellectual) and arrogance of America and the West; a situation that should be reversed with urgency and exigency through ‘proper’ education.

Promote dissemination of indigenous knowledge across cultures

The inclusion of indigenous knowledge in school curriculum will in doubt help different cultures/societies to share their knowledge with each other. This is because people from different cultural background will be made to share and interact with indigenous knowledges from other cultures in a way that will allow them to appreciate and emulate them where necessary. A good example is that of the Washambaa people of the Usambara Mountains in Tanzania who had developed a land use system emulating the climax vegetation of the deciduous natural forest a multi-story integrating annuals and perennials on the same plot. The principles were transferred to Nyabisindu, Rwanda in a Germany Development Cooperation (GTZ) assisted project; special multipurpose contour bunds with trees shrubs and grasses were added to the system and retransferred to the Washambaa once dense population and demand for firewood had depleted the soil cover (cf. World Bank 1998: ii; Mawere 2014).

Promote cultural dimension of development

Every culture is known for something distinctive and inimitable to it. The people of the honorific name (*Chidawo*) of *Chikonamombe* who are of the totem *Mbara* (impala), also known as *Mashayamombe*, are well known for their leather tanning skills and expertise in dye manufacturing. As revealed by Chigwedere (1980; 1982), these people would rustle cattle, slaughter them and quickly dye the hides. When asked by the victims, their

answer was seemingly that of those showing empathy: 'Mashaya mombe!' The Chopi people of Mozambique, for example, are well known for their cultural dance, *timbila*. The Shangaan/Hlengwe people of the Zimbabwean Low Veld are well known for their initiation rites, *Chinamwari/Khomba*, which besides having caused a furore among imperialists and Euro-centric scholars especially during colonialism and some years after independence, has of late has come to be appreciated as helping reducing the chances of HIV/AIDS infection. The Shona people are well known for their *mbira*/thumb piano music normally used to accompany *Mbakumba* dance. They are also known for their stone sculpture such as the Zimbabwe Bird and stone work such as the Great Zimbabwe Monuments. The Kalanga are well known for mat craft. All this knowledge is important in its own right. As emphasised by the World Bank's 1998/99 World Development Report, knowledge, not capital, is the key to sustainable social and economic development. Building on local knowledge, the basic component of any country's knowledge system, is the first step to mobilise such capital. Moreover, there is a growing consensus that knowledge exchange must be a two way street. A vision of knowledge transfer as a sort of conveyor belt moving in one direction from the rich, industrialised countries to poor, developing ones is likely to lead to failure and resentment (cf. World Bank 1998; World Bank 1999). In view of the above, I argue in this chapter that sharing such indigenous knowledges as those mentioned above could not only enhance cultural dimension of development but help reduce poverty among the poor (cf. World Bank 1998). For instance, instead of spending money on circumcision in the 'modern' hospitals, one could go for a traditional one as the one done during *Khomba* initiation rites.

To promote interpersonal relationships and reciprocal obligations

As noted by Woolman (2001: 31): 'traditional education integrated character-building, intellectual training, manual

activities and physical education. The content included all of the activities, rituals, and skills required to sustain the culture and life of the family and community'. This means that traditional education placed great importance on interpersonal relationships and reciprocal obligations. Fafunwa (1982:9-10) recalls: 'In old Africa ... the man who combined good character with a specific skill was adjudged to be a well-educated and well-integrated citizen of his community as trades were learned by the apprenticeship system'. This marks the distinction existent between Western education which emphasises competitive individualism as it eliminates students through failure of tests and African education which emphasised cooperative communalism as it strove to include all children in the community. Yet the task of education as a force that promotes interpersonal relationships remains critical even today. Busia (1964:59), for example, notes that 'the tasks of ... achieving a new social unity and cohesion can only succeed if the citizens share a common set of values and standards of public morality which are supported by law as well as public opinion.' He calls on schools to integrate groups in ways that foster associations, inter-group understanding and cooperation. Jomo Kenyatta (1965) once observed for Europeans individuality is the ideal in life, whereas for Africans, the ideal is good behaviour and relations with other people. As Woolman (2001: 43) observes:

In the West today, schools as well as corporations are concerned about teaching human relations, team-work, and interpersonal skills. This has come about because of a breakdown in family and community that, sadly enough, is also a result of modernisation in Africa.

This connotes that indigenous knowledge that emphasises interpersonal relationships and human values is urgently more needed in contemporary education than ever before.

Conclusion

Indigenous knowledge including intangible heritage falls can contribute immensely to the learning process of the African people if value and a modicum of respect are accorded to them. In fact, the relevance of indigenous knowledge and intangible heritage to the learning process of the African child cannot be underestimated. Yet, the full realisation of indigenous knowledge can only be recognised if it is fully implemented in education curriculum and its importance popularised. Makinde (1988) lamented over those that discard indigenous knowledge and rubbish it as nonsense. Makinde (1988: 106), thus, regrets how very many Western trained medical doctors seek ways of rubbishing and discouraging African traditional medical doctors, by painting them as having no standard, even though it was through the “traditional medicine” that “many of them were safely delivered, nurtured, and successfully treated until they grew up to be medical doctors.” This critique of colonial and post-colonial education together with a quest for identity has prompted some African intellectuals to re-examine the objectives, methods and outcomes of the so-called traditional, pre-colonial education. Such studies will in no doubt offer valuable insights and provide penetrating perspectives for postcolonial education that may become a guide for reformed and constructive education in Africa. Therefore, as long as indigenous knowledge do not find full recognition and real integration in curriculum and the mainstream knowledge discourse, the lofty pan African ideals of collective self-reliance, self-sustaining development and economic growth will remain a dream yet to be realised.

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Cultural Harnessing Among the Tonga of North-western Zimbabwe: Breaking out of the shell of stereotyping, reclaiming identity, and fostering sustainable development through craft

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Introduction and background to the Tonga People

In spite of the varied stereotypes and criticisms that have been levelled against the Tonga people especially those from Zimbabwe; such as, that they are primitive, homeless, men of the bush, and that they have tails, the Tonga people have defied all and sundry. All derogatory and diminutive labelling has been largely a result of researchers failing to understand the Tonga people's unique philosophy of life which despite the threatening forces and tides of globalisation, has by and large, endured and preserved their indigenous cultural world as compared to other ethnic groups found in the country. Due to the stereotypes accorded to the Tonga people, their ethnic group constitute one of Zimbabwe's marginalised groups. The group is concentrated in the north-western part the country. While the Tonga people (heretofore referred to as the Tonga) have contributed significantly to the cultural industry of Zimbabwe their contribution remains largely unrecognised and in fact underestimated especially at national level.

Realising the immense and unparalleled contribution the Tonga have injected in Zimbabwe's cultural industries particularly in the field of wood carving and basketry, this chapter explores the craft consciousness and genius workmanship of the Tonga in areas including but not limited to their identity, culture, environment, world making, and how

they generally relate to the outside world. The need and responsibility to carve life out of one's environment and out of one's capacity to harness his/her own cultural provisions largely accounts for the prevalence of Tonga cultural products on both the local and international markets. Equally fundamental to note is the fact that both Tonga men and women engage in different cultural industries as a way of upholding, appreciating and celebrating their culture; the unequivocal source of their being, identity and world making. As that may be crafts are also used as a means of exhibiting and marketing Tonga culture as well as supporting livelihoods taking into account the fact that their area falls in climatic region five which is characterised by erratic and sporadic rains which more often than not hardly sustain agricultural activities. This climatic reality is one reason why drought resistant crops such as *rapoko* (finger millet) and sorghum are prevalent in this drought stricken area. In view of these challenges, the Tonga have defied the odds with their extraordinary aptitude to sustain and anchor their living from the abundant and locally available cultural capital embedded and invested in their unique crafts and curios.

Many a time, there has been an onslaught of deliberately targeted stereotypes labels at the Tonga people which we argue and dismiss in this chapter as a misnomer and mere exploitation gimmick. In this regard, the present chapter advances the argument that labelling is a capitalist tendency bend on exploitation, plundering and mind twisting. It is political in nature and with parallels to other egoistic undertakings such as colonialism and neo-colonialism which more often than not always come with ulterior motives. Labelling, thus, could be equated to myths which are certainly created to give comfort to those who *create and* project them (see Achebe 1988).

Having stereotyped and dehumanised the Tonga, many people who are involved in the buying and selling of cultural products in Zimbabwe and beyond got away with plenty of

expensive crafts at low cost to eventually reap huge profits that never benefit the Tonga but enrich the *exploiters*. It is evident that as an exploitation strategy, the Tonga people were negatively labelled, in one way or another, especially by those who compete with them in business to make them lose self-esteem and ultimately blind them from realising the importance of their cultural products. Ironically, the demand for the Tonga's unique crafts remains high and popular across the globe, hence salvaging the Tonga culture.

For the Tonga people, culture is not one of life's luxuries, but is instead life itself. Binga District in which most Tonga people are found is surrounded by areas such as the immaculate and famed Victoria Falls (one of the Seven Wonders of the World), Hwange National Park (one of the biggest in the country) and Kariba (where the name, Kariba Dam was adopted from). These areas despite attracting thousands of tourists (both local and international) Tonga crafts. On the international market, Tonga crafts are popular in South Africa, United States of America, Netherlands, India, Germany and United Kingdom, among a host of other countries. In fact, Tonga crafts have traversed the world on behalf of their creators and in the process, Tonga as a culture has fairly been marketed and vindicated at the same time. From a careful study of the Tonga's philosophy of life, we advance that the Tonga people originated their own crafts as demanded by their needs coupled by the dictates of the environment they found themselves in hence it is not art for art's sake.

The genesis of Tonga crafts: Tracing the industry to its roots

Historically speaking, it is true that all carving and/or crafting has its roots in the Stone Age period, where people hunted and gathered their food, using tools made of stone, wood and bone (also see Reynolds 1993; Holden 2002). The Stone Age period arguably marks the advent of Tonga cultural

industries in north-western Zimbabwe. Taking into cognisance that societies are dynamic and inevitable to change, we are however, not limited from reflecting on the Tonga tradition as well as their new ways of world making and innovation of new ways of responding and dealing with problems.

In the course of time, important technological changes occurred as the hunter-gatherer communities influenced by change gradually transformed into farming communities. Thus as farmers, communities began to make pottery and it was during this period that people learned how to smelt iron and copper (see also Reynolds1993; Huffman 2007; Holden 2002). The change to farming in Southern Africa took place in about 400 BC as fairly reflected on their tools. Basing on this premise, it is generally agreed that by about 1100AD, most people in southern Africa were farming as well as hunting and gathering to supplement their diet.

By extension, it is implicit that the Tonga as a community had people who specialise in crafts making as it was very risky for hunter gatherers and subsistence farmers to rely on inadequate food reserves (see Reynolds 1986). In fact, in good years when there was surplus of food some people could choose to devote their energies in making crafts or tools that demanded skill while advancing the Tonga's cultural prowess. The products of technology were, and still are, used as items in exchange either for food during periods of drought or for things not easily obtained in the natural world or by one's own efforts. Although no market place existed then, neighbouring peoples bartered extensively with one another in the late 1800s (Reynolds1993; Holden 2002). The genesis and projection of the cultural industries among the Tonga is clearly exhibited as we witness people shaping materials into art forms in the process of producing objects of utile. Indeed it can be argued that art is the takeover of nature by culture.

This chapter argues that, among other factors, the climatic conditions that characterise the north-western part of Zimbabwe coupled by poor soils were also some of the push

and contributing factors that drove people into the craft industry. The industry has earned the Tonga people respect for their ability to make a living in one of Zimbabwe's agriculturally unproductive environment. The Tonga changed their farming methods, through hunting, fishing, and gathering in response to changes in their surrounding environment. To this end, it is self-evident that people living in climatically hot and arid areas such as Binga tend to learn more skills in order to lessen the naturally induced risks that may impinge on their lives as a result of erratic rainfall and other such climatic conditions.

While people with special skills in making objects took great care to pass on their knowledge to the next generations, it is widely believed that craftsmanship is specialised to a small extent through the belief that only those chosen by the ancestors have the ability to make certain objects (Reynolds 1993). This was confirmed by our interlocutors during fieldwork for this study. One of the interlocutors had this to say:

While craft is part and parcel of our Tonga culture, it is not every one of us who has the aptitude to produce beautiful crafts. It is those that were chosen by the Tonga ancestors that do their craft with more sophistication and skill that ordinary people could hardly do (Fieldnotes 2015).

As far as the Tonga cosmology is concerned, this vignette reveals that sometimes a person may be possessed by a spirit that is talented in craftsmanship. In light of the above, most specialised crafts are therefore limited, in theory at least, to those selected for the work by the ancestral spirits. Oral tradition has it that the spirit of a diseased craftsman is believed to select one of his descendants either matrilineal or patrilineal, to carry on his work. However, in some rare cases a completely

unrelated person may be selected by the ancestral spirits to carry on the work of the 'living-dead' (Mawere 2010; 2012).

One who finds himself attracted to a particular craft is informed by a diviner that she/he has been chosen by one of his ancestors to carry on the practice. To sanction the work, thanks offerings are duly made to the ancestors and his tools, if still in existence, needs no training; the ancestors will supply the necessary skill. This was confirmed by one of our interlocutors during fieldwork who had this to say:

Craftsmanship through an ancestral spirit is an honoured call. Someone who received his craftsmanship from an ancestor needs no human training at all. His training is received through dreams, inspiration, and 'voices' of the ancestor even when awake. All what the 'called person' needs are the tools to do the crafting and not training (Fieldnotes 2015).

Again, periodic offerings and rituals must be made as thanksgiving to the ancestral spirits, particularly the one working in the craftsman. This belief is consistent with the African philosophy of passing or bequeathing culture and heritage from one generation to the other. In the worldview of the Tonga people, the impartation of skills and knowledge is not just physical but even transcends into the spiritual realm. It is a philosophy that revolves around the systematic preservation and promotion of special skills and expertise. This perception of life is important for indigenous communities because it makes them revere those with special skills while the craftsmen also uphold tradition (respect those from whom they got the skills).

On the contrary, some scholars especially those that are not well versed with the Tonga and Shona cosmology at large argue that the theory of selection of spirit mediums (*homwe yemudzimu*) by ancestral spirits is simply escapism; a convenient mechanism to justify success and to excuse failure. They argue that any

man or woman interested in craft can experiment such that if he/she loses heart it is because, on one hand, he/she has not been chosen.

Yet, on the other hand, if one finds an aptitude for the work and continues with it, he/she has obviously been chosen and the ancestral spirit must be identified. This chapter stresses the integrity and fecundity of African culture and heritage. The failure by some scholars to appreciate the innuendos and rhythm of African culture cannot be blamed on the selection theory. What should be stressed is that the theory of selection of *homwe yemudzimu* applies to many facets of African life and has been part of African life from time immemorial. For Africans and particularly, the Tonga, the theory is respected and has sustained tradition from generation to generation thereby ensuring posterity of the culture and its people (cf. Cox 1986). Moreover, Africans people traditionally do not just believe in the selection theory per se as they do not rule out the existence of talented craftsman resulting from learning and mentoring.

Crafts and identity: A Tonga Perspective

Misconceptions about the Tonga people are abound as a result of failure of some researchers to be in sync with the Tonga cosmology and worldview. Stereotypical images of the Tonga people have been projected unabated. While Africa has largely been stereotyped by the West especially during and immediate before colonialism, for the Tonga, it has been even worse. These people have been stereotyped and marginalised both locally and internationally. As a result, it has been essential to give practical evidential answers to these stereotypes and marginalisations. Strikingly, the Tonga managed to come up with a touch that is distinctly Tonga on their crafts no wonder the demand for these on both the local and international markets. Traditional Tonga crafts are generally greatly appreciated and admired for its intrinsic artistic merit and prowess.

While their identity has been plunged into stereotypical images, the Tonga's craftsmanship speaks volumes about their unmistakable identity. Admittedly, craftsmanship is a business, but the enduring pride of being Tonga is always exhibited on Tonga crafts, among many other forms of world making within their spheres of life. Artefacts and crafts by the Tonga people exhibit their ingenuity and resourcefulness. In spite of suffering marginalisation and stereotyping, the Tonga sustained their craftsmanship which in turn asserted their identity and dignity as an equally competitive culture. Artefacts such as Tonga drums, baskets, kitchen wares, stools, doors, to mention just a few, resonate with the Tonga cultural aesthetics. The wrath of socio-political and economical marginalisation on the Tonga ethnic group requires urgent redressing if we are to attain cultural equity. The only platform available to the Tonga was to carve out and express their culture, identity, and worlds beyond reasonable doubt. This indomitable spirit, against all odds, resulted in a distinct well crafted culture now appreciated the world over. It is not surprising therefore that the Tonga crafts have travelled far and wide more than the Tonga people themselves. To this end, it may well be argued that the Tonga willingly and unwillingly have fairly marketed their culture, worlds, and identity through their crafts, perhaps more than any other ethnic group in Zimbabwe.

Today, there are patterns and designs, for instance, on stools, drums, baskets beadwork, doors, among other crafts, that are strictly regarded as belonging to the Tonga. Gauging by the demand for the Tonga crafts the world-over, it is argued in this chapter that these Tonga designs and patterns in themselves are a life investment that the Tonga people should always tap on. This is important given that the Tonga cultural industries did not evolve simply to feed business markets but initially emerged to answer to a plethora of their needs, wishes, hopes and imaginations. In this respect, we argue that Tonga crafting is not art for art's sake but for the Tonga people as well as the outside world's sake. It is an art that asserts identity

while depicting cultural independence. Today, many people appreciate this identity which has led to the prevalence and perpetuation of Tonga cultural industries even beyond the Tonga confinements. Generally, crafts travel more than their makers. Given the exquisiteness of the Tonga crafts, The Tonga people are gradually recognised as a people equal to others of their specie. Thus, what makes the Tonga crafts different on both the local and international markets is the identity and cultural value they carry; for example, the quintessential characteristics that make a stool to be a Tonga stool and the imagination associated with this.

Unmasking the cultural capital of crafts

A marketable identity of a culture is a business; a worthwhile investment. The irony of stereotypes *vis a vis* the unprecedented demand for Tonga artefacts ushered in a new commercial era of Tonga cultural industries. Poor soils and climatic conditions coupled with a sustained socio-economic meltdown in Zimbabwe influenced both urban and rural people to resort to cultural industries as an alternative means of sustaining livelihoods. Traditionally, most African families depend on subsistence farming for their livelihoods. The climatic conditions in Binga, the home to the Tonga, hardly supports agricultural activities and this has driven many people into other pursuits to fend for life.

A new consciousness prevailed around late 1980s; that culture is not just there to be admired or appreciated. Rather, it is a resource, just like any other environmental resource that need tapping for the good of the society it belongs to. In other words, culture itself is 'craft' which can be traded to alleviate livelihoods. Needless to point out that the preservation of a culture is of primary importance, Tonga communities realised that their culture was on demand on the commercial market. This understanding explains why there is now a *BaTonga Community Museum* and a *Binga Community Craft Centre* in Binga. These were constructed to be critical players in cultural

industries of the area in order to support livelihoods while promoting their culture. It is striking to note that owing to economic hardships in Zimbabwe for the past decade or so together with persistent droughts in successive years in the 80s and 90s, cultural industries are a major option especially in north -western part of Zimbabwe. Thus, we witness a shift from the previously discussed selection theory in craftsmanship to a period when all were 'selected' (that is forced by circumstances) to try their luck on crafts. This is typical of many poor and developing economies such as Zimbabwe with large numbers of energetic people unemployed and under such a scenario; people would generally rely on the given environment to help meet their daily needs by way of converting resources into cash (cf. Cunningham 1986; Mawere 2011). Many people easily turn into carving and basketry for the simple reason that they need limited investment in tools. For example, for one to start carving, s/he would need a chisel, axe, adze, hammer while for weaving, one would need a knife which can all be acquired cheaply.

Thus we witness a new cultural dimension where objects are not just for use in the households but are also for sale. The overwhelming demand for these objects has triggered the need for mass production. Out of this demand, the Tonga people have learnt that in order to produce an object, they need material, technical skill and labour. Labour has a cost, that is, it is worth something; which means even one's own labour has a cost. They have also learnt the trends of the business, that is, the value of labour changes depending on scarcity (Reynolds 1993). Commercial wood carving and basketry in the 21st century, for instance, are a microcosm of the 'globalised' world in which the Tonga is an inevitable part.

Traditional artefacts with deep cultural significance have become desired objects of art in far away lands thereby opening a trade window of cultural industries. Tourists go around the world sampling food, culture and exotic environment and buy souvenirs as they travel around the

world. These are popular as gifts and decorative items for the home. This obviously gives pressure on the people who produce them and on the natural environment that still serve as the source for most carved wood.

In Zimbabwe, woodcarving and basketry industries have grown and developed to world-class levels and like in most parts of the world, tourists are the major customers (Cunningham 1986). Commercial crafts production has been viewed largely by donors and rural development agencies as an important industry for the poor rural people, often from remote areas, to enter a cash economy. That is, commercial crafts production provides employment directly, and other income earning possibilities in related activities since it is based on resources that are available to the key target groups. In Zimbabwe, it is commonplace to see a diverse range of forest products being sold along major roads including carvings, thatch, baskets, sisal and baobab mats, and clay pots, among others. Notwithstanding the prevalence of this industry, the central task of this chapter is to fundamentally interrogate how the expanded commercialisation of this industry has affected rural livelihoods, their cultural orientations, and imaginations. What are the most significant tangible benefits that have been brought about by the craft boom on the lives of the people? After assessing what has happened so far in the industry, it is critical for this chapter to determine the major beneficiary in this industry.

While the invention and sustained projection of stereotypes cannot be solely attributed to a capitalist approach to business, we content that many communities have not bothered themselves to unmask the stereotypes in order to exploit the Tonga people. Far from just dehumanising the Tonga people, the stereotypes are an economic ploy to exploit them even worse than before thereby perpetuating the stereotyping and marginalisation. Labelling leads to loss of self-esteem and once one loses their esteem there is no fair trade. We argue, therefore, that once there is no fair trade, the trade becomes a

‘dehumanising activity’. The Tonga people have been deliberately stereotyped so that people can get away with their (Tonga) invaluable crafts. It is a colonialist mentality that feeds on exploitation and bereft of appreciation. It is unfortunate that Africans also exercise this mentality on each other thereby perpetuating imperialistic tendencies that were sadly inherited from their former colonial administrators. It is imperative that the Tonga people benefit from their craftsmanship and realise community development out of it. However, the craftsmanship par excellence of the Tonga is an inheritance never enjoyed by the heir. Rather, foreigners are making the most, getting a lion’s share, out of the Tonga cultural industry at the expense of the craft makers. Until recently, cultural diversity hardly survived in Zimbabwe. Save for the Shona and Ndebele ethnic groups, the majority of other ethnic groups have been given peripheral treatment. These groups include the Nambya, Kalanga, Shangani, Ndau, Tonga, Venda, and Tsonga, only to mention but a few. This peripheral treatment has led to their continual short-changing; a modern form of exploitation. Nevertheless, it is this chapter’s emphasis that the stereotyping, just like colonialism and human slavery, dehumanises more the one who projects it than the one at whom it is targeted. That is, the idea of labelling in order to exploit, is a higher degree of inhumanity. This chapter acknowledges and vindicates the approach adopted by the Tonga people. Instead of them answering the stereotype casted against them with a stereotype, the Tonga people have deployed multiple cultural strategies which only prove that they are well beyond the stereotype. They refuse to sink low.

Conservation of natural resources and sustainability in the Binga Area

Is the craft industry sustainable? The woodcarving / basketry industry discussed in this chapter ranges in size from very small to large. The relationship between natural / cultural resources use and livelihoods is important as the world

increasingly recognises the pressing need to reduce poverty *vis a vis* global warming and other environmental conservation challenges (Cunningham 1986). The best use of resources is to improve the quality of life for each person (Reynolds 1993). Ironically, they are impediments to this aim. The quality of one's life or some people should not impede that of others. More critical is the fact that most resources are finite although few others are renewable. It is even more complex. How do we maintain a balance since the same resources belong to both the present generation and future generations? A symbiotic relationship is desirable but is it practical? The social and environmental impacts arising from the increasing commercialisation of forest products have attracted much attention (Mukamuri 1995a, b; Mundondo 2002). While the importance of income for the poor people from forest products is well recognised, the problem of resource depletion is also underscored.

Livelihoods depend upon natural resources, but the way in which livelihoods are managed determines resource management options (Cunningham 1986; Mawere 2013, 2015). Two key questions arise. First, how can the sustainable use of the natural resources upon which crafts production is based be ensured? Second, how could livelihoods be improved without irreparable harm to the natural resource base?

Significantly, diverse views exist on forest product trade, use and management. In Zimbabwe, there is a general consensus that woodcarving and basketry could be useful tools for both urban and rural development in some areas like Binga, Victoria Falls, Kariba, Birchnough Bridge, Great Zimbabwe Monument, Chimanimani, Nyanga, Chivhu, Lupane, Gwayi Bulawayo, among others (see Matose 2002).

In pre-colonial times, population sizes were small enough to be sustained by local resources. In addition to that, wood, for example, was limited to carving cultural and religious symbols and households utensils. Today, apart from the fact that there has been a fair increase in population growth in

communities and the exploitation of resources, it needs to be pointed out that currently woodcarving/ basketry is predominantly for tourists since the late 1980s (Cunningham 1986). Nevertheless, in Zimbabwe there has been a sharp decline in tourism since 2000 to date owing to political unrest and economic instability (see Mawere and Mubaya 2012). By and large, this has inadvertently averted resource depletion.

One of the critical observations made by the *BaTonga Community Museum and Binga Community Craft Centre* (Mudenda and Chikozho 2015) on a research on craft industries carried out throughout Binga District is that carvers as well as weavers focus on relatively few plant families because they need wood with specific requirements such as close grain tensile strength and resistance to cracking or insect attack. A case in point is, for basket weavers, the palm tree is the only plant suitable for basket weavers. For wood carvers, there are generally two types of trees (i) fast growing trees (light coloured soft woods) and (ii) dense, slow growing hard woods (pea family) which rarely cracks and takes a fine polish. As a matter of fact, carvers prefer and make money out of the slow growing trees which unfortunately are difficult to replenish.

Evidence obtained from our fieldwork in the Binga Area shows that in most cases there is no systematic cutting down of trees. Rather, cutting down of logs is informed by the intended resultant product. This business will be unsustainable in the long run considering that there are no community workshops or education campaigns carried out so that the business can be run sustainably. Since there are no set guidelines, the harvesting of trees is not controlled thereby leaving the environment vulnerable (Mawere 2010; Maguwu 2011). The orders placed or the viability of the business determines the amount of trees to be cut at any given time. The same applies to basket weavers; the rate at which they harvest palm tree leaves is largely dependent on market demand (Personal Observations 2011-2015). In a harsh economic environment, people pay less attention to environmental conservation issues as they struggle

to irk out a living on a daily basis. For them every tree presents or represents a craft per se, an opportunity to fend for life.

In most African communities, the cutting down of trees is never accompanied by replenishing them. The mass production of crafts demands that communities begin to take measures to mitigate environmental crisis. In the case of Zimbabwe, projects such as Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE), and departments like the Forestry Commission, Ministry of Environment particularly the Environmental Management Agency (EMA) and other like-minded organisations need to adopt an integrated approach to salvage resources. The creation of plantations with a bias towards trees targeted by craft makers is urgent before some tree species become extinct. It is fundamental that they appreciate the role played by craftsmen and at the same time actively engage and empower craft makers in their environmental conservation programmes. Moreover, craft makers need to be educated on sustainable use of environmental resources for sustainable community development. Although it may be difficult to implement, especially in poverty-stricken areas, it remains important to empower players in the cultural craft industry so that they know the implications of cutting down trees without replacing them.

From a different angle, low pricing of crafts also accelerates the depletion of resources. In Binga, for example, most crafts are under-priced because of the high level of poverty. Craft-makers are almost always under pressure to sell since there is not much that they get from subsistence farming. The table below is a random sampling of interviews of basket weavers picked under Chief Sikalenge, in Samende Headman Siakula 3, Mangogo Village. Basketry is generally a craft for women and most of these women have organised themselves into groups as a business strategy. See the women basket weavers group and some craft products in figures 1 and 2 below:



Figure 1: Women basket weavers from Samende in Binga



Figure 2: Tonga craft products in Binga

In the table below (Table 1), we provide more research findings on reasons for the Tonga people being involved in Basketry crafts industry and the challenges they face.

NAME OF WEAVER	AGE	YEARS IN CRAFT	REASONS FOR BEING IN THE INDUSTRY	AVERAGE MONTHLY INCOME	CHALLENGES IN CRAFT BUSINESS
Muden da Jane	2 9	9	Comme rcial and domestic	\$40-00	Poor turnover
Munska Mutale	7 2	53	Barter and domestic	\$80-00	Low price and raw materials not close by
Mudend a Pauline	3 2	14	Comme rcial	\$70-00	Poor market and low prices
Mudend a Chapedekesya	8 0	63	Domest ic and commercial	\$75-00	No constant customers
Mwiinde Nolia	5 5	34	Cultural ad commercial	\$100-00	Unpredictab le market
Mweem be Mbembe	7 0	50	Cultural and commercial	\$90-00	Too few customers
Muchim ba Maria	5 2	27	Domest ic and commercial	\$90-00	Unreliable market and low prices
Mweem be Bonani	3 1	14	Comme rcial	\$50-00	Poor turnover

Table 1: Demographic data of Tonga people in basketry crafts industry

It is evident from the table above that a lot still needs to be done to market Tonga crafts if the livelihoods of craft makers are to be improved considerably without disturbing sustainability in Binga. It is also clear that the commercial

aspect has become a natural part of basket making no wonder the notable changes in design and patterns at times. This is in an attempt to satisfy the market and in the process embracing globalisation. The traditional Tonga basket and the commercial Tonga basket are markedly different and one is never confused for the other. Figures 3, 4 and 5 below show this difference:



Figure 3: Traditional Tonga basket



Figure 4: Commercial Craft basket mostly used for Interior decoration



Figure 5: Commercial Craft Basket

Indeed, the Tonga people have lived up to the expectations of the market. This flexibility by Tonga craft makers points to their infinite resourcefulness and versatility. The *New Basket Workshop* hosted by the Binga Community Craft Centre serves as a good example, it emphasised quality control of craftsmanship and many new market-oriented baskets were woven thereby upgrading skills (see Lee and Stillwell 2011). In turn, this had a positive impact on the sales.

The species used in the curving normally depend upon availability and suitability for specific crafts. Common crafts notable in groups visited include chairs, tables, carved animals, basins, wooden bread bins, wooden three legged pots, drums, stools and wooden spoons, among others. See figure 6 below for wooden craft chairs:



Figure 6: Wooden Craft Chairs

The table below (Table 2) is a random sample of interviews of groups of woodcarvers in Binga District. The most commonly carved species is pod mahogany, *Afzeliacquanzensis* (*Mukamba*). Other popularly used species include; (*Musanta*) *Kirkiaacuminata*, (*Siachimwa*) *Commiphorapyracanthoides* and (*Mutorotoro/Mutyokela*) *c.mollis*.

NAME OF WEAVER	AVERAGE AGE	REASONS FOR BEING IN THE INDUSTRY	AVERAGE MONTHLY INCOME	CHALLENGES IN CRAFT BUSINESS
Saba	25	Commercial	\$50-00	No constant customers
Chamber	32	Commercial	\$65-00	Low prices
Tinde	34	Commercial	\$80-00	Poor turnover
Makunku	35	Commercial	\$60-00	Raw material found a distant away
Simbala	31	Commercial	\$55-00	Market unpredictable

Table 2: Showing the Tonga in woodcarving craft industry

From the information provided in table 2 above, one can see that the average age of carvers is generally of the economically active group. These are men employing themselves to feed their families. Another observation was that wood carvers suffer more in terms of raw materials because they cut down trees where as weavers harvest only the old leaves of the palm tree without having to cut down the plant. Only fully grown up leaves give high quality raw materials for basket making. This means that a palm tree serves weavers with raw materials for as long as it grows. To an extent, it may well be argued that basket making is environmentally friendly and fairly sustainable as opposed to woodcarving. See the effects of wood carving in figure 7 below:



Figure 7: Evidence of resource depletion

However, low monthly incomes on both tables 1 and 2 point to impoverished livelihoods. Among other factors, an ailing economy in the country is a major contributory factor and for this reason one normally finds carvers or basket makers underbidding one another but paradoxically, they all lose out in the process. Art is a fickle business. Generally, Tonga craft makers have not realised a fair share of the craft industry. The middlemen and the customers have been the major beneficiaries. Many of the groups have stopped producing while others prefer to barter their crafts (Lee and Stillwell 2011; Fieldnotes 2015). It is about time the craftmakers enjoyed the

real value of their work through fair pricing. The carvers find it difficult to make ends meet from their earnings and more often than not, people enter and leave the activity depending upon what other opportunities exist at the time. For most people craft making is a fallback activity, that is, something to do if there is nothing better to do (see also Cunningham 1986). It is important to note that the industry is treated as secondary largely because of low profits realised. Otherwise, with better prices, craft making can become a full time activity and the Binga community can develop fairly fast the standard of life too. When people realise and enjoy the benefits of craft making they also become conscious of the value of environmental conservation resulting in sustainable development.

The Tonga and Zimbabwe's statutory landscape

The legal instruments used to control deforestation in Zimbabwe are the Forest Act, chapter 19:05 and the Communal Land Forest Produce Act, chapter 19:04. These Acts are administered by Forest Commission of Zimbabwe. They make it an offense to cut, injure, remove and collect any forest produce without authority and to move firewood from one place to another without a timber movement permit issued by the Forest Commission (Herald 2014; Mundondo 2002; cf. Mawere 2015). Any viable industry needs to be guided and operate within a given legislative framework. The need to balance between resource use and conservation demands that every country and community operate within the context of a germane legislative framework. Traditional culture had, and still has, its own taboos that ensured, implicitly or explicitly, environmental conservation. Some plant species were neither used for any building materials like poles nor cut for firewood. Trees such as the wooden pear/*Schrebera trichoclada* (*Mupatupatu* in Tonga) serve as a good example of such species in the Tonga community. A deeper look into traditional taboos reveals that this species is good for carving cooking sticks an essential utensil for daily use at household level. Other species

were simply conserved despite having less known use but probably because of rare occurrence, the *Duika berry* (*Mukunku* in Tonga) for example. Interestingly, trees conserved may differ from one community to another but the principle universally exists across Tonga communities. Men and women took constant inspiration and advice from their history and traditions. The raw materials, including wood and reeds, were taken from the natural world that was inhabited by the ancestral spirits who dwelt in or around sacred hills. Quite often, strict taboos governed who could collect such materials and how the extraction was to be carried out (Ellert 2002).

In Zimbabwe there is no clear policy on the commercialisation of forest products, with some organisations promoting it as a means of improving income and others trying to halt it due to the fear of adverse environmental impact (Cunningham 1986). This means that the legal contradictions that relate to woodcraft production and sale need to be adequately addressed through greater inter-sectoral integration.

Although it is locally perceived that trees in communal and resettlement areas fall under the collective ownership of the local communities, official legislation gives control to rural district councils, Forestry Commission, Environmental Management Agency and traditional leaders. There are four main legal instruments that relate to the use of wood resources in Zimbabwe. These include:

- (i) Environmental Management Act, Chapter (20:27);
- (ii) Traditional Leaders Act, Chapter 29:17;
- (iii) Communal Land Forestry Produce Act, Chapter (19:04);
- (iv) Rural District Council Act, Chapter (29:13)

It is crucial to point out that the Environmental Management Agency (EMA) and the Forest Commission play a pivotal role in the conservation and protection of forests in Zimbabwe. EMA's mandate is to promote sustainable utilisation of natural resources and protection of the

environment; while the Forest Commission specialises in the conservation of gazetted and non-gazetted forests and Zimbabwe's vegetation (Herald 2014). On a broader spectrum, EMA's role is to maintain a healthy ecosystem and promote biodiversity while that of the Forest Commission is to administer, control and manage state forests for the protection of trees, control the cutting of trees, drive afforestation projects as well as regulate and control trade in forest produce (Herald 2014).

According to Makonese (2008) and Mawere (2015), the Traditional Leaders' Act gives traditional leaders powers to manage the environmental and natural resources within their areas and jurisdiction. Section 5 deals with the duties of chiefs and some of the duties include the following:

- Ensuring that land and its natural resources are used and exploited in terms of the law (section 5 (1) (1);
- Controlling the indiscriminate destruction of flora (plants) and fauna (animals) (section 5 (1) (1) (iii);
- Preventing the degradation, abuse and misuse of natural resources in their areas (section 5 (1) (1) (iv).

Communally owned woodlands and forests are *de jure* State-owned, but *de facto* community owned and managed under traditional or local authority structures. Communal areas have a long history of communal management, and the institutional arrangements have existed for many generations. In communal areas, woodland resources are managed through a variety of mechanisms, including customary practices such as sacred forests and controls, village control systems under the authority of either traditional leaders or elected officials, and individual household control over arable patches and around homesteads (cf. Mandondo 2000).

Of paramount importance to note is section 4 of the Communal Land Forest Produce Act which allows inhabitants

of communal land (and by implication, those in A1 and similar model resettlement areas) to exploit forest produce for own use and not for commercial purposes (Herald 2014).

While the above four legal instruments may be founded on the basis of the same principles and are designed to achieve the same goals, it is surprising that in most cases they act independently of each other which exposes the very resources that they all seek to conserve. The use of natural resources in Zimbabwe is regulated by a multiplicity of laws that may impinge on customary (also known as traditional) systems governing natural resources in Zimbabwe. For instance, many of the laws in the framework for natural resource management in Zimbabwe recognise the role of local people and make a case for the involvement of traditional authorities (Sowman and Wynberg 2014; Mawere 2015). However, statutes such as the Rural District Council Act and Forest Act vest considerable powers in rural district councils and the Forest Commission as regulatory bodies-in effect excluding traditional authorities from involvement in decisions such as the granting of permission for harvesting. Additionally, certain technical officials view local people as agents of resource degradation (Matose 2002) not as potential co-managers thereby thwarting the umbrella Environmental Management Act's objective of involving local people in natural resource management. A further example of tension between a statutory intervention and its implication is the possibility of a complete ban on craft making in terms of the Communal Land Forest Produce Act. In an attempt to relieve pressure on the resource base, the state may use this instrument to prohibit craft making, while trying to identify alternative livelihood options for forest-dependent residents (Sowman and Wynberg 2014; Makamuri 1995a, b). There is need to really integrate related legislation if it is to apply practically. An integrated approach is vital. Given the economic meltdown Zimbabwe has been going through for almost over a decade now, the government departments entrusted with implementing the different Acts are currently

doing little to educate communities because of limited resources. Rather, the focus is only on revenue collection at the expense of the very resources wherefrom the revenue comes. The future of sustainable development in cultural industries lies in the engagement and empowerment of communities. After all, the resources are located right in the same communities that need empowerment on the best ways possible to use them sustainably. Empowered with knowledge about resource use and conservation communities may turn out to be pivotal players in steering their own development in a sustainable manner.

The dilemma of many African countries is that while legislation may be in place, it is generally not known. In addition, it normally does not specifically articulate issues in a practical way to the African context. Thus, legislation remains remote while communities seek practical solutions. In Binga District, for example, the rural district authority charges levies on the producers of crafts for ‘exploitation’ of raw materials. One in craft trade needs to buy an ‘exploitation permit’ through the Binga Rural District Council Communal Areas Management Programme for Indigenous Resources (CAMPFIRE) project. The description of the permit on its own depicts more about the unfavourable relationship between authorities and craftmakers. This chapter advances that resources are only important in so far as they relate to communities. In fact, there is no way resources can be more important than human beings. Equally important is the fact that communities cannot survive without resources; it is cardinal therefore that resources are used sparingly. Colonial forest statutes that are still in place were increasingly challenged by the livelihood needs of communal residents who were becoming more dependent on forest resources, especially following the severe drought of 1991 to 1992. CAMPFIRE and agricultural production thus became a viable livelihood option for marginal communal areas with rich wildlife in woodland habitats (Campbell, Constanza and van den Belt 2000).

Alternative income sources based on forest resources – including woodcrafts, baskets and mats – also increased in importance (Gondo 2004; Sola 2004).

The other challenge for the Tonga people is that there is great distance between Binga Town and major cities in Zimbabwe where main government offices are found. There is need for craft makers to get direct current information relating to their industry on a regular basis. For instance, most crafts people are not well versed in Zimbabwe revenue authority, customs and related export clearance procedures for them to be able to directly sell their own wares without having to involve the middlemen. This information is integral considering that craft makers realise low sales and make a little profit for that matter. African governments need to put concerted effort to protect small indigenous businesses like the craft industry which can reduce unemployment considerably.

At village level, the traditional leadership is the guardian of resources and oversee their use. Unfortunately, either the policy is not known or there is no clear policy harmony and coordination between village leaders and the rural councils to the extent that local rules may differ from one village to the other. Strikingly, a number of village leaders have also become involved in woodcarving and basketry and therefore find it difficult to enforce traditional rules that limit the wanton cutting down of trees. Moreover, as carvers go further away in search of logs, challenges arise as the customary laws of environment conservation of other villages come into play. There is need for clear policies conversant with communities. It is also important for African governments to integrate traditional conservation measures with modern scientific methods for better results.

Conclusion

The craft industry of the Tonga people has been curved by many enduring years of focus, commitment, imagination and world making. It is an industry dictated to them by their culture but at the same time, as this chapter has shown, a handy tool at their disposal addressing socio-economic inequalities, political imbalances, cultural inequities, identity and livelihoods support issues. Admittedly, it is not just craft for craft's sake. From the discussion it is abundantly clear that craft is a business as well as a cultural manifestation of a people's integrity, uniqueness and resourcefulness as they advance and celebrate their culture. Craft making is an industry largely dependent on environmental resources and therefore the need to balance conservation and use cannot be over-emphasised. Resources in their own right are unimportant; their importance is invested in people who have use for them. Their value is derived from use as people strive to improve the quality of life. Environmental resources are important in so far as they relate to people; alleviating livelihoods. The onus is thus upon African governments to come up with user-friendly pieces of legislation, clear enough to facilitate the sustainable use of natural resources for community development and national development at large. Government departments entrusted with facilitating and overseeing the use and conservation of environmental resources should also be well resourced so that through various environmental conservation and resource use programmes, workshops and projects, they can empower craftmakers and communities at large with knowledge. This makes resource use and conservation everyone's responsibility. Communities can only conserve when they know and unlock the value in resources.

Again, at the core of the craft industry is the need for good marketing. Tonga craft makers can achieve recognition, respect and very high prices in the world market. But as Cunningham (1986) argues, without proper marketing and linkages many

skilled carvers and weavers labour in obscurity and, too often, in poverty. Craftmakers, most of whom are in the rural areas, need business guidance and to be strategically positioned if their full potential is to be realised. Cultural industries and tourism, if well managed, can drive economies and support sustainable development.

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This book argues that the basic component of any society's social security and sustainability is cultural capital and its ability to fully recognise diversity in knowledge production and advancement. However, with regard to African societies, since the dawn of racial slavery and colonialism, cultural capital – indigenous knowledge in particular – has iniquitously and acrimoniously suffered marginalisation and pejorative ragtags. Increasingly since the 1990s, cultural capital informed by African knowledge systems has taken central stage in discussions of sustainability and development. This is not unrelated with the recognition by America and Europe in particular of the central role that cultural capital could and should assume in the logic of development and sustainability at a global level. Unfortunately, action has often failed to match words with regard to the situation in Africa. The current book seeks to make a difference by exploring the role that African cultural capital could and should assume to guarantee development and sustainability on the continent and globally. It argues that lofty pan-African ideals of collective self-reliance, self-sustaining development and economic growth would come to naught unless determined and decisive steps are taken towards full recognition of indigenous cultural capital on the continent.

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Langaa Research & Publishing
Common Initiative Group
P.O. Box 902 Mankon
Bamenda
North West Region
Cameroon

ISBN 978-9956-762-50-7



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